

# Killing KING ABACUS #2



for relations without measure



# KILLING KING ABACUS #2

Here we give you another of our yearly jigsaw puzzles without edges or end and whose pieces are not set in stone. The present social order reproduces measured relations and necrophilic logics through its institutions and mechanisms, its money, science, schools, police, work, consumed leisure.... To Kill King Abacus is to create relations without measure, relations of affinity produced in struggle to destroy the state and capital, to destroy our separation from the conditions of our existence. As rebellion and mutiny spread, the passive attitude begins to be transformed into its opposite, the process itself becomes uncontrollable. And it is only through uncontrollable struggle that social order disintegrates, and a true rupture can take place. For this we need both fire and ideas.

This isn't a politics, a claim on alienated power. We offer our ideas for discussion and hope to get replies, the most interesting of which will be printed in the next Hot Tide Discussion Bulletin with our comments. For this reason, in this issue we begin with a Notes and Comment section with briefer articles not intended to be the last word on a subject, but our thoughts on how to move forward with this project of freeing ourselves from our present conditions of enslavement and creating free relations without measure.

We hope to hear from you...

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## Some Notes on Insurrectionary Anarchism

Insurrectionary anarchism is not an ideological solution to all social problems, a commodity on the capitalist market of ideologies and opinions, but an on-going praxis aimed at putting an end to the domination of the state and the continuance of capitalism, which requires analysis and discussion to advance. We don't look to some ideal society or offer an image of utopia for public consumption. Throughout history, most anarchists, except those who believed that society would evolve to the point that it would leave the state behind, have been insurrectionary anarchists. Most simply, this means that the state will not merely wither away, thus anarchists must attack, for waiting is defeat; what is needed is open mutiny and the spreading of subversion among the exploited and excluded. Here we spell out some implications that we and some other insurrectionary anarchists draw from this general problem: if the state will not disappear on its own, how then do we end its existence? It is, therefore, primarily a practice, and focuses on the organization of attack. These notes are in no way a closed or finished product; we hope they are a part of an ongoing discussion, and we most certainly

welcome responses (interesting responses will be printed in the next issue of Hot Tide). Much of this comes from past issues of Insurrection and pamphlets from Elephant Editions (see the Insurrection Page on our website or write us if interested).

### 1: THE STATE WILL NOT JUST DISAPPEAR; ATTACK

--The State of capital will not "wither away," as it seems many anarchists have come to believe--not only entrenched in abstract positions of 'waiting,' but some even openly condemning the acts of those for whom the creation of the new world depends on the destruction of the old. Attack is the refusal of mediation, pacification, sacrifice, accommodation, and compromise.

--It is through acting and learning to act, not propaganda, that we will open the path to insurrection, although propaganda has a role in clarifying how to act. Waiting only teaches waiting; in acting one learns to act.

--The force of an insurrection is social, not military. The measure for evaluating the importance of a generalized revolt is not the armed clash, but on the contrary the amplitude of the paralysis of the economy, of normality.

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All unsigned articles and all translations (except the Sandra K. piece) are by the editors. *Reproduce at will.*

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2. SELF-ACTIVITY versus managed revolt: from insurrection to revolution

--As anarchists, the revolution is our constant point of reference, no matter what we are doing or what problem we are concerned with. But the revolution is not a myth simply to be used as a point of reference. Precisely because it is a concrete event, it must be built daily through more modest attempts which do not have all the liberating characteristics of the social revolution in the true sense. These more modest attempts are insurrections. In them the uprising of the most exploited and excluded of society and the most politically sensitized minority opens the way to the possible involvement of increasingly wider strata of exploited on a flux of rebellion which could lead to revolution.

--Struggles must be developed, both in the intermediate and long term. Clear strategies are necessary to allow different methods to be used in a coordinated and fruitful way.

--Autonomous action: the self-management of struggle means that those that struggle are autonomous in their decisions and actions; this is the opposite of an organization of synthesis which always attempts to take control of struggle. Struggles that are synthesized within a single controlling organization are easily integrated into the power structure of present society. Self-organized struggles are by nature uncontrollable when they are spread across the social terrain.

3. UNCONTROLLABILITY versus managed revolt: the spread of attack

--It is never possible to see the outcome of a specific struggle in advance. Even a limited struggle can have the most unexpected consequences. The passage from the various insurrections--limited and circumscribed--to revolution can never be guaranteed in advance by any method.

--What the system is afraid of is not these acts of sabotage in themselves, so much as their spreading socially. Every proletarianized individual who disposes of even the most modest means can draw up his or her objectives, alone or along with others. It is materially impossible for the State and capital to police the apparatus of control that operates over the whole social territory. Anyone who really wants to contest the network of control can make their own theoretical and practical contribution. The appearance of the first broken links coincides with the spreading of acts of sabotage. The anonymous practice of social self-liberation could spread to all fields, breaking the codes of prevention put into place by power.

--Small actions, therefore, easily reproducible, requiring unsophisticated means that are available to all, are by their very simplicity and spontaneity

uncontrollable. They make a mockery of even the most advanced technological developments in counter-insurgency.

4. PERMANENT CONFLICTUALITY versus mediation with institutional forces

--Conflictuality should be seen as a permanent element in the struggle against those in power. A struggle which lacks this element ends up pushing us towards mediating with the institutions, grows accustomed to the habits of delegating and believing in an illusory emancipation carried out by parliamentary decree, to the very point of actively participating in our own exploitation ourselves.

--There might perhaps be individual reasons for doubting the attempt to reach one's aims with violent means. But when non-violence comes to be raised to the level of a non-violable principle, and where reality is divided into 'good' and 'bad,' then arguments cease to have value, and everything is seen in terms of submission and obedience. The officials of the anti-globalization movement, by distancing themselves and denouncing others have clarified one point in particular: that they see their principles--to which they feel duty-bound--as a claim to power over the movement as a whole.

5. ILLEGALITY; insurrection isn't just robbing banks

--Insurrectionary anarchism isn't a morality on survival: we all survive in various ways, often in compromise with capital, depending on our social position, our talents and tastes. We certainly aren't morally against the use of illegal means to free ourselves from the fetters of wage slavery in order to live and carry on our projects, yet we also don't fetishize illegalism or turn it into some kind of religion with martyrs; it is simply a means, and often a good one.

6. INFORMAL ORGANIZATION; not professional revolutionaries or activists, not permanent organizations

From party/union to self-organization:

--Profound differences exist within the revolutionary movement: the anarchist tendency towards quality of the struggle and its self-organization and the authoritarian tendency towards quantity and centralization.

--Organization is for concrete tasks: thus we are against the party, syndicate and permanent organization, all of which act to synthesize struggle and become elements of integration for capital and the state. Their purpose comes to be their own existence, in the worst case they first build the organization then find or create the struggle. Our task is to act; organization is a means. Thus we are



against the delegation of action or practice to an organization: we need generalized action that leads to insurrection, not managed struggles. Organization should not be for the *defense* of certain interests, but of *attack* on certain interests.

--Informal organization is based on a number of comrades linked by a common affinity; its propulsive element is always action. The wider the range of problems these comrades face as a whole, the greater their affinity will be. It follows that the real organization, the effective capacity to act together, i.e. knowing where to find each other, the study and analysis of problems together, and the passing to action, all takes place in relation to the affinity reached and has nothing to do with programs, platforms, flags or more or less camouflaged parties. The informal anarchist organization is therefore a specific organization which gathers around a common affinity.

The anarchist minority and the exploited and excluded:

--We are of the exploited and excluded, and thus our task is to act. Yet some critique all action that is not part of a large and visible social movement as "acting in the place of the proletariat." They counsel analysis and waiting, instead of acting. Supposedly, we are not exploited alongside the exploited; our desires, our rage and our weaknesses are not part of the class struggle. This is nothing but another ideological separation between the exploited and subversives.

--The active anarchist minority is not slave to numbers but continues to act against power even when the class clash is at a low level within the exploited of society. Anarchist action should not therefore aim at organizing and defending the whole of the class of exploited in one vast organization to see the struggle from beginning to end, but should identify single aspects of the struggle and carry them through to their conclusion of attack. We must also move away from the stereotypical images of the great mass struggles, and the concept of the infinite growth of a movement that is to dominate and control everything.

--The relationship with the multitude of exploited and excluded cannot be structured as something that must endure the passage of time, i.e. be based on growth to infinity and resistance against the attack of the exploiters. It must have a more reduced specific dimension, one that is decidedly that of attack and not a rearguard relationship.

--We can start building our struggle in such a way that conditions of revolt can emerge and latent conflict can develop and be brought to the fore. In this way a contact is established between the anarchist minority and the specific situation where the struggle can be developed.



## 7. THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE SOCIAL: individualism and communism, a false problem

--We embrace what is best in individualism and what is best in communism.

--Insurrection begins with the desire of individuals to break out of constrained and controlled circumstances, the desire to reappropriate the capacity to create one's own life as one sees fit. This requires that they overcome the separation between them and their conditions of existence. Where the few, the privileged, control the conditions of existence, it is not possible for most individuals to truly determine their existence on their terms. Individuality can only flourish where equality of access to the conditions of existence is the social reality. This equality of access is communism; what individuals do with that access is up to them and those around them. Thus there is no equality or identity of individuals implied in true communism. What forces us into an identity or an equality of being are the social roles laid upon us by our present system. There is no contradiction between individuality and communism.

## 8. WE ARE THE EXPLOITED, we are the contradiction: this is no time for waiting

--Certainly, capitalism contains deep contradictions which push it towards procedures of adjustment and evolution aimed at avoiding the periodic crises which afflict it; but we cannot cradle ourselves in waiting for these crises. When they happen they will be welcomed if they respond to the requirements for accelerating the elements of the insurrectional process. As the exploited, however, we are the fundamental contradiction for capitalism. Thus the time is always ripe for insurrection, just as we can note that humanity could have ended the existence of the state at any time in its history. A rupture in the continual reproduction of this system of exploitation and oppression has always been possible.



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## Notes on Alienation

A whole series of alienations has spread to separate us from all that surrounds us; social alienations, so commented upon by anarchists and Marxists alike, include private property, exchange, and the division of labor: all that separates us from our conditions of existence. Within capitalism, social alienations interpose themselves between humans and their activity. Most directly, alienation is the gap between desire and what is socially valued (for capitalism, valued as productive of surplus value). Yet alienation occurs on another level as well: that of the alienation of power, our power to act, which is separated from us and instituted in the State form. The young Marx commented on this, although in later Marxists a critique of alienated power is painfully absent. The maintenance of alienated power is what politics is all about: it is the apportioning or arrangement of alienated power. Parties are political in that they try to claim a portion of alienated power by claiming to represent the interests of a section of society. An anti-politics is a self-organization of people's power not a claim on alienated power; it is the self-activity of people reclaiming their power by using their power and the fight against its realiation into permanent institutions.

Unfortunately, many anarchists today also seem to lack any critique of alienated power: this has become especially clear during the recent sweep of anti-globalization protests. Some anarchists are calling for a shift to a form of alienated power different from the one we have at present, and yet not questioning the alienation of power in general: this usually takes the form of a vague call for more democracy, which maintains and institutionalizes a separation between decision and action (See our article "The Anarchist Ethic in the Age of the Anti-Globalization Movement" in this issue for a more in depth discussion of alienated power and the current anti-globalization protests.) Secondly, it is important to understand value as an activity and pertaining to activities; in this society, economics usually defines value as pertaining to objects, thus activities and processes are ideologically reified into things. Therefore, capitalist valorization also alienates us from our power to act, from our activity, and from our desires.

Yet some anarchists take the critique of alienation much further. Social alienation, in the form of private property, exchange, the division of labor, and alienated power, can be thought of as second order alienation. These are specific forms that first

order alienation takes in our society. The split between Subject and Object is a first order alienation; it is based in a consciousness which is self-reflexive in its understanding of itself. This alienation of Subject and Object, of human and nature, is mediated by productive activity and language. However, rejection of all mediation and alienation in general is close to a mysticism in its idealization of the identity of the Subject and Object. This is an idealization of nature and demands forgetting species consciousness, language, etc.

While we certainly believe it is important to have a more critical perspective on these second order alienations, we think it is a mistake to believe that social revolution can bring about a unity between Subject and Object, between self and nature, in the fullest sense. Overcoming first order alienations, of course, is impossible without first overcoming second order alienations, and if a successful social revolution were to finish off the State, and private property and the division of labor were to disappear, individuals may wish to attempt the task of overcoming first order alienations. Those who try to overcome the first order in the present usually wander off into the realm of the mystical, Hakim Bey being a notable example (this is not to suggest this is something individuals should avoid—it is, of course, entirely up to them whether to undertake such a task—only that to begin with the first is to attempt a mystical unity and to depart from humanity and from any attempt to overcome second order alienations socially). It seems like the focus on first order alienations is in part derived from an extreme pessimism towards the possibility of any fundamental change in our society; in this sense it is a symptom that is closely related to New Age philosophy.

Primitivism distinguishes itself in part by its thorough critique of all forms of alienation of first and second order. Yet as a critique it tends to concentrate its force on first order alienations. Most primitivists clearly understand that the first order of alienations could not be overcome without a social revolution, but a focus on the first order instead of the second offer little insight to how we are to overcome either orders of alienation: this is because most of these critiques grow out of philosophical reflection rather than a theoretical reflection upon practice.

If we are to develop an insurrectionary anti-politics, we need to be clear and thorough in our critique of alienation without falling into mysticism or politics, and without idealizing a unity that may never have existed and to which social revolution cannot return us.



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## NOTES TOWARD A NEW ANALYSIS OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF DOMINATION

As recently as 65 years ago, it was common to find analyses in anarchist literature of the *institutions* in which the various forms of domination were manifested. If one wrote of the oppression of women, the family and marriage would be examined and exposed. If the repression of pleasure and the joy of life was the question under discussion, religion and law would be put under the gun. The institutional framework upon which this society has been built was recognized as the source of exploitation, domination and alienation.

It seems that in recent times this institutional framework has been largely forgotten. Of the various institutions into which our alienated creative potential has been accumulated to our detriment, only the state and capital (and occasionally technology) seem to get mentioned to any significant extent any more and even these are frequently treated more as states of mind than as concrete social institutions. Thus, we discover that anarchists are against *statism* (whatever that is) rather than the state. So Bookchin can claim to be anti-statist while promoting the ancient Greek city-state as a model for his democratic version of "anarchy".

Every other form of oppression also becomes an "ism" (*racism*, *sexism*, etc.) or worse (*homophobia* implies a psychological disorder needing therapy, not a form of social repression calling for revolt). Of course, we do not deny the reality of the ideologies of bigotry and their penetration into the thoughts and feelings of the exploited and oppressed. But without an understanding of the institutional framework of oppression and domination, it is not possible to understand how the ruling class uses these ideologies to divide those they exploit.

Even the seemingly most radical (because their rhetoric is most extreme) in the anarchist milieu do not escape this. The critique coming from primitivist and anti-civilization circles far too often aims its verbal attack at a nebulous, poorly defined civilization. Certainly, "for the destruction of civilization" sounds radical. On my own terms, I even agree with it. But on

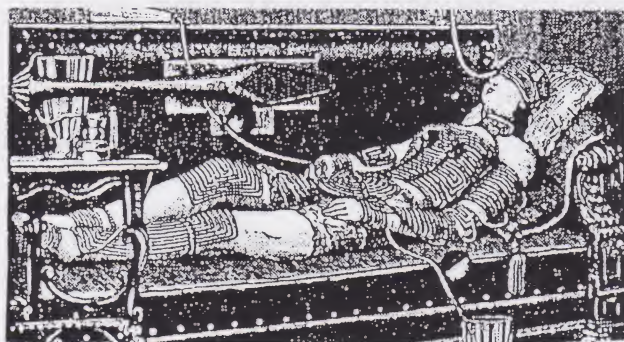
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### Civilization and History: a comment on John Conner's *The Rise of the West*

Much of the more recent primitivist and anti-civilization writings have taken a very idealist turn, holding up "Reason" and "Progress" as the root of our

my terms, civilization is not some nebulous, largely mental, category springing from rationalism or the western mindset or whatever undesirable way of thinking; it is a network of concrete *social institutions* that I confront in my daily life: the state, the economy, religion, the family, technological systems, and so on, all very real entities that no mind games will eradicate.

And here is where the current tendency falls short. When an analysis of the institutional framework of oppression, exploitation, domination and alienation are forgotten, therapy replaces revolution. We are forced to deal with the pathetic, whining confessions of a Chris Crass or the bad pop psychology of the writers of "Stick it to the Manarchy" (using terms like "manarchy" is a sure sign that someone is saying nothing worth hearing) as they try to work out their



insipient "sexism", "racism", "homophobia" and "classism" which are no longer ideologies of bigotry, but low-level mental illnesses suffered by the self-proclaimed "privileged" of all classes.

Any serious revolutionary anarchist has to see all of this as just another ploy by the cowardly and by those who still have some stake in the present order to put off the real decision about which side they are on in the struggle against this society. Those of us who are serious about destroying the present world in order to create our lives as our own have no time for these self-indulgent mind-games reminiscent of 12-step groups ("My name is..., and I am an addict of my own repression"). Our task is before us: to expose and attack the *institutions* that have stolen our lives from us and, in the process, to reappropriate our lives. Whatever small bits of oppressive mentality might survive this process can be dealt with when we've accomplished this task.

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present condition and, often, motors of history. Thus the Enlightenment comes to be largely responsible for our predicament. These anti-civ writings step in line with conservative histories, except that they revalue such history negatively.

John Conner's *The Rise of the West: A Brief Outline of the Last Thousand Years* is meant to bring



up questions and not be the last word of anti-civilization history. And it is in that light that this brief comment should be taken as well (this is in no way a review or critique of Conner's piece in general).

In Conner's narration of the rise of the west, his answer to the first, difficult question--of whether we can talk of the rise of the west without talking about the rest of the world--is telling of how he understands the historical process. He writes off China in a couple of sentences: China was "too politically stable and centralized for its own good." In other words, China was too civilized, so the west economically passed China. This is a bit of a confusing argument for the anti-civ perspective--too much civilization kept Chinese civilization from progressing. And this is indeed an old argument--Conner cites Max Weber--although, in general, most historians of China discount it today; those prone to repeat it are conservative historians of the west. China supposedly had little progress, or as Conner puts it, "It just so happens that within the last thousand years or so, the focus of Progress in the



world has been the West" (p.4). So is it that civilization breeds stability or progress? Conner doesn't tell; but once he turns to the west it is Progress--with a capital 'P'--that is the driving motor of history. (Presumably, like Weber, therefore, China has no history until the west arrives--another common Eurocentric view of China, and for that matter the rest of the world.)

What do we lose with this conservative (albeit revalued) Eurocentric historical narrative? We lose an understanding of the importance of colonialism to the rise of European capitalism. It is American silver that give the west an edge in Asian trade, without which history would have been markedly different. Capitalism has always been globalizing, and it cannot be understood as a national phenomenon. Those who choose to view the rise of the west in isolation from the rest of the world often fall into an idealist perspective on history; this is just what happens to

Conner. To the question of what unique element was internal to the west driving it to develop, Conner basically answers with "Progress." From an isolated and reductionist view, the material basis for the west's rise over Asia comes to be hidden.

In their explanation of the rise of the west, the argument of most conservative, Eurocentric historians revolves around European uniqueness, the restless spirit of Europeans, or an ideal of Progress that drives the west to develop, and likewise drives them out into the world. It is usually explained, that Asia, Africa and the New World lacked this spirit (the same spirit that drove scientific inquiry in the west). Conner's narrative doesn't stray far from this argument. Following the development of the ideology of Progress, Conner maps out the battles between the church and Medieval heresies, the church and renaissance thought, the church and the Enlightenment with the development of science and materialism, and the church finally being vanquished by evolution. Because we have Darwin's theory of evolution, we have social Darwinism, "thus" we have imperialism--a very simple explanation indeed. And with this logic we can understand Nazi mass-murder as "a product of Progress, a fruit of the Enlightenment and what came thereafter..."(p.46). And so the west drives on to its own sure death, its beating heart Progress.

Conner states, "My concern...is not with the past, at least not for its own sake, but for the future" (p.54). Yet, unlike Fredy Perlman's *Against His-story, Against Leviathan*, which focuses heavily on the resistance to civilization, in Conner's account resistance only gets minor mention. So what of practice? How do we attack an ideal? Through rebelling the veil of illusions will drop and we will see clearly: "Once we have sensed what it is to be without Civilization, beyond the veil, we must never surrender this vision and the connecting together of all things it supplies. When we know this, Civilization is but an illusion, a ghastly one to be torn down as soon and as well as we are able" (p.57). Here civilization itself becomes an illusion.

So why this turn to idealist history? In part it seems to stem from primitivists' desire to differentiate themselves from Marxism. It is a critique of the ideology of progress that most clearly marks the line between primitivists and Marxists or leftists. But it is unnecessary to slide from a critique of ideology into an idealist conception of history. Unfortunately, that is exactly what happens in John Conner's *The Rise of the West*.

*The Rise of the West* is three and a half Pounds from Green Anarchist, BCM 1715, London WC1N 3XX, U.K..



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## Parody and Subversion: Notes on Roles

Roles are the repetitive performance of a particular set of power relations. The incentive for playing a role is a shred of power; even when one plays a submissive role there must be some sort of incentive even if this is only a negative incentive, the avoidance of a worse fate. To say that roles are performances doesn't make them unreal, roles are real acts, acts that are repeated until they harden into habit. Roles do not appear from nowhere, they are perpetuated by institutions such as the family, the workplace, businesses, bureaucracies, schools, and roles in turn perpetuate the power structures of these institutions. There are objective social structures and institutions that perpetuate roles, this does not mean that they



are set in stone. There are subjective desires to subvert and destroy these roles, this doesn't mean that this is easy or that subversion will succeed. In the tension between the structures of power and the desire to rebel, the game of subversion is played.

Ethnicity, gender and class existed before capitalism but in very different forms. Ethnicity has been changed drastically by the rise of the nation state, gender roles have been changed by the proletarianization of women, and it is quite obvious that the rise of capitalism changed class structure. Nevertheless roles based on gender, ethnicity and class were used to perpetuate power relations by the structures of power both before the rise of capitalism and after. Nationality is something that people often don't historicize, people simply don't realize how young the nation state is and that this has effected the very idea of cultural identity. Our present concept of ethnicity (this word comes from the Greek word for nation) is shaped by the nation state. Some imagine that nationality existed in its present form long before the rise of the nation-state and others imagine that patriarchy existed in a stronger form in the past, that it

is now slowly fading away into nothingness. Patriarchy is one of the more obvious examples of a process that perpetuated roles of domination and submission long before capitalism. I would argue that some forms of patriarchy have indeed lessened but that overall patriarchy is not fading away, it has been merely reconfigured by capital into a different form, those aspects that limited the flow of capital and the proletarianization of women were changed. Patriarchy is not one global monolithic structure; it is cultural, and has varied forms. It starts in the family, spreads to other institutions and is thus reproduced throughout society. Capitalism reproduces new mutated forms of patriarchy, it uses gender difference just as it does class and ethnic/racial differences, to exploit the labor force to the greatest degree possible.

How do we use categories of identity to understand the society we live in without perpetuating the very roles that we wish to move beyond? This is tricky, if we simply throw away the categories that describe gender, race, and ethnicity we lose important tools that we need to understand how this society functions, how these categories effect and structure our relations. On the other hand, it is easy to fall into perpetuating the very roles that we wish to transcend. This is a problem that often surfaces within identity politics, which start with an identity category as a point of departure. Since such politics are based in identity categories which are fundamentally tied to roles, unless there's a conscious attempt to subvert roles, one instead reinforces them. Recently the article "Stick it to the Manarchy" referred to women and people of color in the same lists of categories as the elderly and children as if being female or not white made a person less capable of dealing with demonstrations and riots. The argument is that people of color are prosecuted more harshly, this is true, yet I have never noticed this being a deterrent. In fact, in my experience it is those who come from more privileged backgrounds that are more scared in such situations. What their reason is for including women on this list I can't figure out. In any case they fall into a patronizing tone in spite of any intentions to the contrary. There is a danger that discussion about gender can fall into patronizing tones that reinforce the role of the woman as victim. On the other hand, this doesn't mean that we should avoid discussion about sexism which is very real, or that women shouldn't complain about getting fucked over because they want to avoid perpetuating an image of the woman as victim. We can only throw away the categories of gender, race, class and so on when we are dancing on the ruins of this society and have learned to relate to each other without these roles in a classless stateless society. Until then we can't just



pretend that we are all treated equally, simply proclaiming the death of these social divisions by refusing to refer to them does nothing except forfeit a means to confront the problems that they create.

Race (or at least racism), unlike ethnicity, is based on a person's appearance and not necessarily their culture. I do not mean to imply that race is biological, it is a social construction, but that for example a black person raised by white people, who is culturally indistinguishable from whites, still experiences racism. Gender is generally structured around biological sex (a person has to drastically change their appearance to be treated as a different gender); the traits that are described by these categories are partially biological (or based on the assumption of the presence of a certain biology) and thus it is impossible to completely break with these categories as long as the present society remains since they will effect how people treat you no matter how you act. That is, race and gender consist of more than just roles.

Roles are social because they are relations, they are performances in which there is always an interaction with the audience. They cannot simply be broken with on an individual level; by changing or breaking with a role one is necessarily changing a relation. However, this does not mean that they can only be broken with collectively, or only by society as a whole. To change roles is to change relations, such change can occur on many scales, it is not only a question of collective change. There are innumerable intermediate scales to social change that lay between the individual and the collective or the individual and the societal. Therefore we do not need to wait until some "collective break" seems imminent to move beyond the roles that shape our relations. It is precisely by not waiting and starting to subvert these relations now at whatever scale possible that a break might eventually spread throughout society as a whole. I am not referring to a collective break in the sense of a homogenous simultaneous break with roles but a multifarious rupture that spreads throughout society; the concept of roleless relations necessarily implies multiplicity for to act without a role is to act without the very power relations that create homogeneity. Of course it is not that easy, it is not just a question of everybody trying to make change in their daily lives and this change adding up to a sum total of revolution. A large-scale break with roles implies a large scale break with the power relations that roles perpetuate, in other words capital and the state must be destroyed in all of their manifestations, the multiple micro ways in which they filter into our



relations, and their macro institutional forms.

To break with a role is not something that can be achieved immediately or easily, often one must first go through a process of subverting and bending roles, playing with them, making the unnaturalness of roles obvious through parody. How do we expose the unnaturalness of gender, race or nationality? Parody can expose a role as unnatural. When someone misappropriates a gender role, when a man badly copies female behavior or vice versa we may be forced to think about whether there is a "genuine" female and male behavior. Is the transvestite copying true femaleness or maleness or is s/he copying a copy? Suddenly everything gets confusing. Is she a real woman? Is there such a thing?

How do we organize ourselves in a qualitatively different manner without the constraints of roles? How would we organize ourselves if the most powerful and repressive structures which reproduce our present social roles were absent? It is important to be able to imagine such a situation and attempt to organize ourselves differently, without the roles that constrain us and perpetuate the state-capital machine, to the degree possible, here and now.



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## NEVER CRY WOLF

The nature of revolutionary solidarity lies in recognizing one's own struggle in the struggle of others, in the actions they choose to take, the risks they confront in their battle against the social order. Thus, it does not mean uncritical support, but rather includes an intelligent analysis of each action in terms of aims, tactics and repercussions. Every act of revolt, every attack against the rule of the state and capital is part of the struggle for freedom and life, and every response that condemns these acts is a rejection of the solidarity that is a necessary part of our struggle. The practice of solidarity must necessarily reject the binary logic in which one must either uncritically embrace an action or else condemn it.

On March 31, 2001, unknown people set fire to 36 SUVs at the Romania car dealership in Eugene, Oregon. A few days later a communiqué was published explaining the action. The communiqué referred to two people accused by the authorities with doing similar actions: "...Romania Chevrolet is the same location that was targeted last June, for which two earth warriors, Free and Critter, are being persecuted. The techno-industrial state thinks it can stop the growing resistance by jailing some of us, but they cannot jail the spirit of those who know another world is possible. The fire that burns in Free and Critter burns within all of us and cannot be extinguished by locking them up..."

Upon hearing of this action, my immediate response was that of solidarity—this was an expression of my struggle as well. At the same time, I recognized the untimeliness of the action, particularly in the light of the wording of the communiqué. Jeffrey "Free" Luers' trial was to begin in less than a week and the wording of the communiqué could easily be taken as implying that he had been involved in the arson of the previous June even though he hadn't yet claimed responsibility for this act. (Craig "Critter" Marshall had already begun to serve a five and a half year sentence for the first Romania arson.) Certainly, this action was likely to have an effect on the trial. Nonetheless, it is essential to remember that, however important strategic considerations may be, they can never be the first considerations in acts of revolt. The need to rebel and attack the order that dominates and oppresses us is always the primary consideration.

Unfortunately, the moment Free's lawyer had his trial postponed, the walls of condemnation against this more recent attack began. While some merely condemned the attack as stupid and blamed those who did it for increasing state repression, others went as far as to claim that this action was carried out by

police or the FBI. Those who made these latter allegations had no evidence whatsoever; they were simply unhappy about the timing of the action and its possible consequence.

Those who carry out attacks against the present social order are never to blame for the repressive acts of state. The state, of course, will use such attacks to justify its repressive activity, but when anarchists begin to use a mirror image of this state logic to condemn those acts of revolt that don't fit their ideal, it is a nauseating case of cowardice. The state, *and only the state*, is ever to blame for state repression. It has the power of monopolized violence and can use it whenever it sees fit—as quickly, at times, in the face of a word as in the face of a deed. The act of rebellion is always a gamble. Of course, one can examine the situation, estimate the odds and then decide to take the risk or not. But one can never know the outcome with certainty, particularly since the circumstances in which one acts are largely in the hands of one's enemy. In this light, every condemnation of an act of revolt based upon real or potential repressive responses of the state is absurd from the standpoint of the enemies of the state.

The attribution of acts of revolt to police agencies—particularly without proof—is potentially quite harmful. Those who set the fire on March 31 may one day face trial for this action—this is one of the many possible consequences of their gamble. The chatterers spreading these groundless rumors are creating an atmosphere that works against critical solidarity in a situation where this might be prove essential. It is an all too common story, reminding one of those anarchists who parroted the media's claim that the Unabomber was a madman and thus pushed the discussion of his actions and ideas into the binary logic of condemnation and disassociation on the one hand and uncritical praise (at times verging on a disturbing near-canonization as portrayed in the "He tried to save us" fliers). One is also reminded of the case of Marinus Van der Lubbe who was transformed from a council communist insurgent into a dupe or an agent of the nazis by a stroke of the stalinist and social-democratic pen in spite of the fact that even in the face of nazi torture and his impending execution, he refused to lie and say that his attack was a communist conspiracy. Anarchists would do well to avoid rumors regardless of the circumstance, but rumors that could undermine the foundations of revolutionary solidarity are truly dangerous. In a situation where the odds are already against us, those who spread such rumors are creating yet another circumstance that favors the state.

On June 11, 2001, Free was sentenced to 23 years in prison for his alleged participation in the first attack



against the Romania car dealership and an attempted arson at Tyree Oil Inc. During the course of his trial, he claimed responsibility for burning the three cars at Romania Chevrolet but denied having anything to do with the attempt against Tyree Oil. Of course, the judge, worthy servant of the state that he is, found Free guilty on all counts. To our knowledge neither Free nor Critter have commented on the most recent attack at the Romania car lot. But as we see it, Free,

Critter and the night-adventurers of March 31 are all our comrades in struggle. The actions claimed by Free and by these more recent illuminators of the night reflect our own hatred for this society and its poisonous effects. We do not know who started the fire on March 31, but we do know that in the face of acts of revolt we who are enemies of the state would do well to remember this advice: never cry wolf.

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## YaBasta: Politics Dressed in White Overalls

There has been much talk about the Italian group YaBasta--and even imitations!--in anarchist circles. And while it should be clear to anyone paying attention that YaBasta (a.k.a. "Movement in White Overalls") isn't an anarchist organization, the problems with YaBasta go much deeper. Not only does YaBasta openly dialogue and work with the state (including supporting and running candidates in elections), but they even collude with the state to suppress anarchists and anarchist projects. Yet it is not only YaBasta as a particular organization that anarchists should be wary of, but as a method of organization and a model of struggle--the focus of most anarchists' acritical jubilation--YaBasta is highly problematic. They have explicitly moved away from self-organization and towards politics, away from conflictual action towards mediated, public spectacles (often arranged with the police in advance). Thus we include the article below to clarify where YaBasta stands in relation to the state, anarchists, and social revolution. But don't take our word for it, look at the quotes from YaBasta themselves at the end of the article.

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### UNMASK SIMULATIONS IN WHITE OVERALLS

The birth of the so-called "Movement in White Overalls" traces back to 1998, when the Social Centers referring to the "Charter of Milan" decided to break away--in their image as well--from the rest of the antagonist movement that didn't adopt the political positions expressed in that document.

The "Charter of Milan" welled up in an assembly held in that town on September 19, 1998, at the Leoncavallo Social Center. It appears to be the converging point of various paths within the area of social centers, such as Leoncavallo, the "Melting" of social centers in North-East Italy (Padua, Venice-Mestre etc.) and some in Rome (Corto Circuito, Forte Prenestino). Later on centers of Liguria and Marche

also flowed in.

The paths followed weren't on the whole homogeneous, but had been growing in the former period around the tendency marked by militants seeking re-definition and a new political role; the practice was carried out through connections with the institutional "left" as well as with sectors of volunteer associations, catholic ones in particular. At the same time negotiations had been undertaken with mayors--right-wing ones as well--to obtain political recognition, and legalize squatted centers with the claim that they were offering public services and entertainment, organized through social cooperatives, tied to the "non-profit" sector.

In Mestre (Venice) in particular, negotiations resulted in the town-council purchasing the squatted center "Rivolta" --formerly a factory--at the approx. cost of 1 million US\$ paid with public funds, favored by Benetton's economic group, followed by legalization. Such a political "turn"--applauded both on left-wing press and TV--was then presented as the consequence of a theoretical revision assuming that the period of class struggle and communist subversion had expired, recognizing a not well defined "civil society" as a new interlocutor, and pointing out as a strategic goal a "conflictive reform of welfare" through the claiming of universal rights, in the first place "citizen's revenue".

In order to support these views, the social centers of the Milan Charter discovered a queer federalism: municipalism and self-government were no longer seen as radical alternatives for social self organization, but rather as a "new" model of democratic participation and political representation within institutions such as local administrations. Thus Leoncavallo ended up supporting a Christian Democrat like Martinazzoli running to be elected mayor of Milan. While peeping from behind the flag of neo-zapatism, the next step was participation of members of this area in local elections in the ranks of the Green Party or Rifondazione Comunista with an attitude expressing all but opposition to the center-left governments. Luca Casarini, a spokesman (but really, leader) of the W.O. was assigned as advisor of Livia Turco, minister of Social Affairs whose name is bound



to the law that introduced concentration "kamps" for paperless or non legalized immigrants, waiting for expulsion. Since 1998, as a consequence of this "new" political course, a deep rupture has taken place within the antagonist movement, with on the one side W.O. more and more involved in institutional and social-democratic context; on the other, social centers, squatts and experiences of social and syndicalist self-organization that keep their points of reference in "Autonomia di Classe" or the variegated



expressions of anarchism ranging from squatters to the Anarchist Federation (FAI). During street demonstrations, one item occurred to worsen fractures--so-called "civil disobedience". On more than one occasion it appeared plainly that some clashes between W.O. and police had been agreed beforehand, as denounced in the daily-paper "il Manifesto" (Feb. 1, 2000) in an article by Livio Quagliata titled "Urban guerrilla? But please!". Moreover, on several occasions and different places (Bologna, Aviano, Treviso, Trieste, Venice, Rovigo), W.O. have been responsible of physical aggressions, threats and informer behavior against autonomous, anarchists, revolutionary communists and other sections of the movement for self organization who reject political hegemony that W.O. pretends to impose on the entire opposition movement with the complicity of the media.

---Sandra K.

## STATEMENTS AND INTERVIEWS

"The State isn't anymore the enemy to throw down, but the counterpart with whom we had to discuss things." (Interview of Luca Casarini, leader of the W.O., supplement of the daily Il Gazzettino, 23 April 1998).

"...Excuse us, comrades, but for us your intransigence regarding principles and refusal of any mediation with the institutions are more binded to anarchist thinking and populist maximalism, like that of the former left wing organization Lotta Continua, than to our political formation of activists. There is nothing wrong with it, just clear up the question. Do allow us just to observe that the neo-anarchists propagandists of the direct action and the fundamentalist and orthodox neo-

communists have in common the same extremism in pseudo-revolutionary language." (taken from the declaration "Camminiamo interrogandoci", written by Radio Sherwood in Padova, responding at the Movimento Antagonista Toscano, october 1996 ).



"In the North East part of the country in the social centres, we have produced new cadres, serious people like Luca Casarini. They are ours or aren't they!? Now some social centres are orienting themselves as an independent enterprise. They have Cacciari (the Mayor of Venice) as an intelligent interlocutor, they are thinking as a democratic lobby" (Interview of Fausto Bertinotti, secretary of Rifondazione Comunista Party, in Il Manifesto of 16 July 1998).

"The day that they won't call us anymore "autonomi" will be a feast [...] Ideology has been outrun" (Interview of Max Gallob, spokesman of the social centre Pedro in Padova in the daily Il Gazzettino of 15 march 2000).

"A Davos we have, along with Josef Bove, the leader of the French farmers, taken the megaphone inviting to isolate those who were chopping windows. We did succeed, with the help of the youngsters of the social centres of Mestre [...] I did meet the boys of the social centres of Mestre and Padova who were taken by Manconi (ex-secretary of the Green Party). I spoke with them, I told them that at the first violent action they would been chased away; after that I did listen to their reasoning. As a matter of fact in Davos they stood at our side, they didn't throw any molotovs". (Interview of Grazia Francescato, parliamentary and leader of the Green party in the daily Corriere della Sera of 25 may 2000).

"In the antique shop we find the remains of revolutionary traditions that passed by in the history of the XXth century: the communist one, the anarchist, the workerist and other ones. Let's look at them, disillusioned because of what they are: fragments of a time passed by that, with all their splendor and misery, victories and defeats, can't return anymore, can't be reconstructed" (from an statement on line by the redaction of Radio Sherwood, spring 2000).



# Brittle Utopias

In the Istanbul of the Ottoman Empire there was a palace with seemingly endless corridors; where those outside had little idea what happened inside and those in one department didn't know what happened in the other. At least that's how it was in the imagination of Ismael Kadare, the Albanian novelist who wrote The Palace of Dreams. In his novel, the protagonist is given a job as a dream reader. He is sent to a room that he has difficulty finding, and told to read the dreams of others, sorting them into those that are of no interest, and that need to be investigated further: those that could be prophesies of events that will be threatening to the state. People throughout the empire submitted written accounts of their dreams to local offices in hope that their dreams would be selected, sent to Istanbul, and later proven to be prophetic. Little did they know that some dreams would be labeled as exposing threats to the state and that this didn't bode well for the dreamers. Kadare knew what we also know: that dreams have the potential to threaten the structures of power.

Without dreams, visions that reach beyond the death marches of this society, war, industry, pollution, boredom, we cannot destroy that which tries to doom us to a passive yet stressful ambulant numbness. I recognize the stench of rotting flesh, but I'm not sure how to freshen the air. But is it necessary for us to conceive of a detailed plan of the world that we will build in the place of the putrefying corpse? Or is it more necessary to first perform the cremation rites? It is more important to know which path to take away from this social order than to be certain what one will do upon arriving at the end of it.

In The Conquest of Bread, Kropotkin laid out a detailed account of how, at that time, communism could be achieved without government. He even included statistics of production levels. These are long out dated of course, but I don't think that his vision was meant to be a strict model for communism even at the time that he wrote it, for in the same text he said: "Now all history, all the experience of the human race and all social psychology, unite in showing that the best and fairest way is to trust the decision to those whom it concerns most nearly. It is they alone who can consider and allow for the hundred and one details which must necessarily be overlooked in any merely official redistribution." (Kropotkin, The Conquest of Bread p. 94) When we draw upon the utopian dreams of others we must be careful not to stick to narrow minded imitations of dreams that are born from other situations, on the other hand dreams that come from drastically different situations at times ignite a spark of inspiration that allows one to approach the present situation in a dynamic way. Some dreams are supple and resonate with the ever renewed present, others become fossilized, they are so dry and brittle that they crack and shatter to pieces when they try to move from the dream into reality.

Some utopias are visions of places in which humans can be truly present, places that lack the ever proliferating forms of mediation of this society. Others are non-places, these are dreams that are old even if just conceived of though they don't crack, they are too unified, too pristine. Ethnic cleansing, Communism with a big C, the nation, pure capitalism, these utopias can never be fully brought into practice, but that is not the problem. The problem is that there are powerful structures which try to bring these grand-plans into being, to the letter and with scientific precision. I don't want to live in a non-place where social problems can be solved with mathematical formulae and human beings become Xs and Ys. Social relations are unsolvable, we can only appear to solve them by temporarily forcing them into a relatively static position, at the cost of great human misery. Anarchy cannot be a great leap forward. Anarchy is not a non-place where human beings must bend to fit a mold.

Some dreams create people that are inscribed upon like a scratched record, they go around in circles always returning to the same point. Cracked dreams fall into the actual world in pieces, bite sized easily digestible bits, like a situationist slogan in a computer ad. Cracked dreams become the motor of a history that produces only novelty and nothing new. The frustrated dreams of one generation are reflections back at society in the slogans of the status quo of the next. These reflections are distortions, twisted mockeries of the dreams of those who itched to blast out of history into an utterly other utopia.



The distorted reflections of unrealized dreams inspire reaction. Unrealized desires cause frustration; when blocked from action people become reactive. They react to the limited choices that are relentlessly thrust upon them, an endless string of lesser evils. We have all experienced unrealized desires that have become resentment. Cracked dreams are ever recycled by resentment, by their lack of realization and our incapacity to act, by a society which limits our actions so severely that we are often left to merely react to its repressive mechanisms.

There are those who disdain all talk of destruction, who hold that creation is the essence of action, that destruction is the antithesis of any accomplishment or social change. But creation and destruction are twined processes like life and death. Modern science describes energy as being neither created or destroyed but merely transformed. Transformation is simultaneous creation and destruction, for one state to be created another must be destroyed. Hindu mythology describes Shiva as a creator and destroyer. It seems logical to me that they should attribute both functions to one god.<sup>1</sup> So how is it that so many of those who call for social change above all else shrink away from the very idea of destruction, as if a new social reality can be created without destroying the state-capital leviathan? It is interesting to look at what kinds of activities many of these people hold up as being creative deeds. There are the progressives who think that it is important to work within the system, to vote, to be a good citizen. These people are often very busy re-creating the present social order. Busy work is elevated to a high deed by those who value reaction over action. Unable to act willfully, left with Pepsi challenge like options, one becomes frustrated but is compensated by a large quantity of possible reactions, the busy work of writing letters to congressmen, going to demonstrations, filing lawsuits. The frustrated desire to act becomes answering an opinion poll on a news show. Stand up and be counted, but what does all this counting add up to?

This mentality also surfaces among radicals. Miscellaneous forms of busy work, attending meetings, circulating pamphlets, running the local radical infoshop are considered necessarily superior to all forms of sabotage because these are viewed as constructive tasks, while sabotage is viewed as destructive. While some of what is held up as creative, the creation of places to meet, discussions and publications and flyers that open communication, are important parts of any social struggle, others are but 1001 types of busywork that only serve to reproduce the present social relations. Those that broke windows in Seattle, the ELF, neoluddites and other saboteurs, they don't do anything but break things. Meanwhile back at the collective, the same person who makes such accusations is splitting hairs to achieve a consensus decision about how to set up a fundraiser. A brick through the window of Niketown, a firebomb in the GOP headquarters, these acts of destruction create more than the brilliant cascade of glass shards or sparks, more than the joys of redecorating that which we abhor. Behind the barricades and in the dead of night something else is born, our own active powers burn as brightly as Vail, when private property is no longer private nor property we have created new relations with each other and to the spaces that we have been locked out of for so long.

In this necrophilic society, reactive busy work bears many still births amidst the smokestacks and concrete.

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<sup>1</sup> I use this example to illustrate a point. I do not intend to glorify Hinduism itself, which is force of oppression in India today; the caste system being just the most obvious example. When I was in India I noticed that many western travelers romanticized Hinduism without taking even a second to look at its effects, even when they brutally stared them in the face.

## We Go On

by Albert Libertad

We don't have faith, we have absolutely no confidence in our success: we are certain that we have neglected nothing, that we have made all our efforts in order to be on the correct road.

We are not certain that we will succeed: we are not certain that we are right.

We don't know, it is not possible for us to know if success will be at the end of our efforts, if it will be the reward; we try to act so that, logically, we should arrive at the result that interests us.

Those that envision the goal from the first steps, those that want the certitude of reaching it before walking never arrive.

Whatever the task undertaken may be, if the completion is near, who can say they've seen the end? Who can say: I will plentifully reap that which I sow; I will live in this house which I build, I will eat the fruits of the tree which I plant?

And therefore, one throws the wheat on the ground, one arranges the stones one by one, one surrounds the fruit-tree with care.

Because one does not know for certain, for sure, for whom, how, when the result will be, will one neglect one's efforts for that which will be possibly good? Will one throw the grain on the hard rock or mix it with the tares? Will one arrange the stones without the square



and the plumb-line? Will one put the seedling at the crossroads of the four winds?

The joy of the result is already in the joy of effort. He who makes the first steps in a direction that he has every reason to believe good, already arrives at the goal, that's to say, at the reward of this labor.

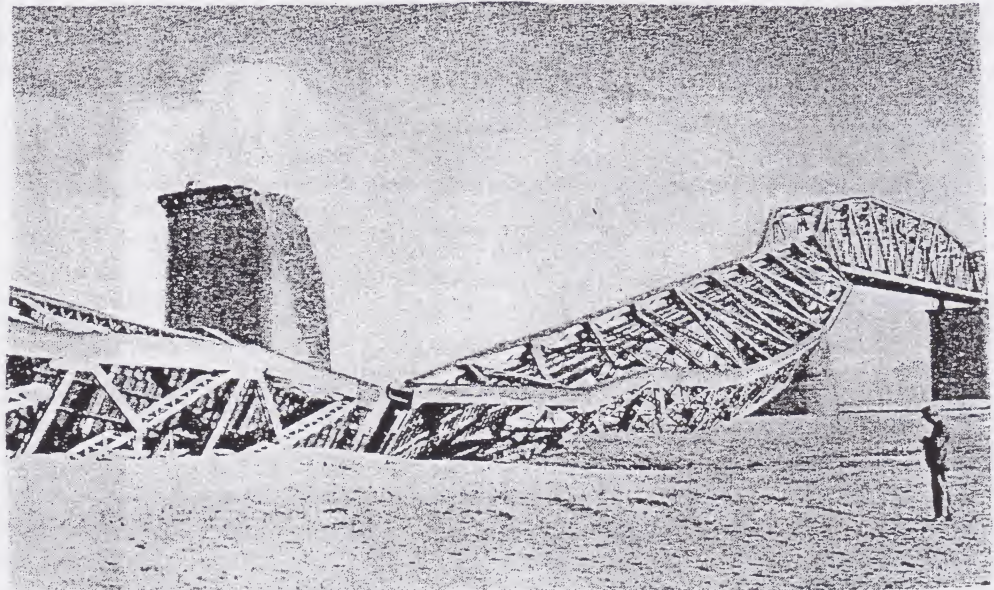
We don't need to know if we will succeed, if men will come to live in a great enough harmony to assure the complete development of their individuality, we have to do the deeds for that which may be, to go in the direction that both our reason and our experience aptly decide.

We don't say: "Men are born good, they should therefore harmonize their relations" We say "Logically, it will be in the interest of men to obtain with the least effort the greatest sum of well being; not from the point of view of eliminating effort, but of always using it for betterment. It is thus necessary to show them where our interest is. The understanding between individuals is the best means to come to assure human happiness. Lets try to make him understand it."

The idea of a meteor collision with the earth, a collapse of the sun, a great fire being able to interrupt our show or our experience, cannot hinder all of us from beginning. Likewise, the misunderstanding of our ideas and practice by the majority of men, be it due to cretinism or perversity would not be a reason to stop us from thinking and critiquing.

The frustrated desire for change produces the novelty of seasonal fashions, Windows 95 98 2000, these things are qualitatively similar to their previous versions. Windows 2000 is only quantitatively different than previous versions. How many bytes do you have in your hard drive? Novelty is incomparable with the renewal of life, the difference between a mother and a daughter, a green shoot and a seed. The renewal of life is fundamentally connected to death. This society drains a little life from us every day in the same way that it hides death. Joyous cries on the subway are about as rare as a dead body on the road. A friend of mine came to visit me in China from the US, he was shocked to see all of those little animals in cages waiting to be slaughtered. He had eaten meat for 30 years before that without being particularly bothered by the idea. In the richer countries, though we breathe in cancerous fumes, death is hidden away, wiped clean. Where death is packed in Styrofoam, one has to wonder what kind of life can be lived. Creation which doesn't include a little death isn't part of life, it is instead the clonelike reproduction of the same. The cycles of software and fashion and other clones born from busywork escape death and were therefore never part of life. Our struggle should be a creative destruction, not the reproduction of living death.

We do not wish to become agents of the reproduction of the same. We dream of other ways of relating, of a utopia that is a real living dying rotting breathing place, a utopia of process not a brittle non-place. We wish to blast out of this history, a history of reaction. Hindu mythology conceives of creation and destruction as paired processes, life coming with death. It also envisioned that this age is part of the kali yuga, the black age, the last age, the cow is on her last leg and when the kali yuga ends she will be legless. The cow will go splat, the world will end. Maybe the ancient Hindu scholars saw it this way because since creation and destruction are paired, the world is a process of constant transformation, there can be no social order that is eternal, it too must eventually die. Maybe then it is not the realists who see things most clearly, since their vision is trapped in the present, but those dreamer utopians who know that this society could not possibly be permanent, those who are trying to kick at the cow's last leg.





# THE END OF THE WORLD

by Mare Almani

On September 13, 1999, at the power station at Tokaimura on the Pacific coast of Japan, the most serious nuclear accident since the time of Chernobyl took place. During a laboratory experiment, three technicians spilled sixteen kilograms of uranium into a sedimentation tank designed to hold little more than two. The error started a chain reaction that continued for many hours, contaminating the entire area surrounding the station for a radius of several kilometers. The population residing in the vicinity of the installation wasn't evacuated until several hours after the accident and another 20 hours were required before the intervention of 18 volunteers "stopped"—according to statements of the Japanese government—the radiation leak. However, word got out, the news originating from the Land of the Rising Sun left the entire world with baited breath for a few days.

We are informed of disasters everyday, but this one assumes quite specific contours. More than AIDS which lays a heavy weight upon the promises of the senses, more than railway accidents which discourage one from traveling, more than digestive disorders which revive anorexia, more than air pollution which merely renders breathing unpleasant, what happened in Tokaimura casts its most appropriate and sinister light on the epoch in which we live. Perhaps because the place where this most recent nuclear disaster happened is the same place where the first one occurred, namely Japan, and this gives us the idea of the vise that, having returned to the place where it started, definitively closes the panorama of our future.

However, no one deals with the lesser consequence of the event that has upset our prospects for over half a century: the atomic menace that has completely overturned our sensible horizons by casting us into a world susceptible to being annihilated at any moment. Beyond the real danger, there has never been any way to measure the extent to which the eventuality of nuclear destruction has struck out imaginations, damaging the unreality that animates it and with it our thirst for freedom. The nuclear has succeeded in seizing the *desire for the end of the world* which, in a certain sense, embodies the fascination and terror that is felt in front of a freedom without limits and which from time immemorial has given imagination its excess, and reducing it to a mere technical possibility at the disposal of power. How can we forget that up until the middle of the last century, this very desire for the end of the world had fueled the thoughts of most radicals, forming the sensible source of an unlimited critical energy? And how can we not see that the very possibility of nuclear annihilation deprives the imagination of this infinite perspective?

Even though it may seem paradoxical, the desire for the end of the world has always been one of the great motive forces for human beings. This absolute negation has been lived as the concrete effort to snatch the possibility of determining one's own existence from divine or earthly authority. Once the fear of punishment was rejected, the end of the world became the proudest manifestation of the negativity in which human desire is rooted. Sade's crime is that he was the first to unveil the terrible secret that is hidden in the heart of the individual and to draw the due consequences from it. The anguish and the exaltation bound to the restless awareness of this force of negation are easily traceable in all those who have opened fire on that which surrounds them from the dugout trench of their particular inclinations.

But since the second world war, that which the inexorable possibilities, that were opened in the face of the Creative Nothing evoked by Stirner, couple to themselves is spoiled, corroded, poisoned, contaminated *from the start*. Today we know that the blank slate that has always formed the basis for radical social transformation is no longer capable of keeping its promises. In this way it has come to assume a suspicious mien in our eyes. When everything totters on the

All work begun is on its way to completion, whatever the resistance of the attacked group may be. It is not a question of speculating about the magnificence or the proximity of the goal to reach, but rather of convincing oneself with a constant critique with which one proceeds handsomely, and doesn't get lost in digressions.

We go on with ardor, with strength, with pleasure in such a direction determined because we are aware of having done everything and of being ready to do anything so that this is in the right direction. We bring to the study the greatest care, the greatest attention, and we give the greatest energy to action. While we direct our activity in a given direction, it's not a matter of telling ourselves: "Work is hard; statist society is solidly organized; the foolishness of men is considerable", it would be better to show us that we are heading in the wrong direction. If one reached it, we would use the same force, in another direction, without faltering. Because we don't have faith in such a goal, the illusion of such a paradise, but in the certitude of using our effort in the best direction.

It would not be worthwhile to concern ourselves with an immediate, tangible result, if it obstructs, diverts our exact path. The bait of reforms attracting the mass of men would not be able to hinder us.

To accelerate our march, we don't need



mirages showing us the closest end, within our hand's reach. It will be enough for us to know that we go on and that, if we sometimes stamp around the same spot, we do not go astray.

The mirage calls us to the right and to the left, diverts you, and, if one succeeds in returning to the correct road, this is weakened and diminished by lost illusion. The intoxication of words and illusions resembles that of alcohol, it can throw the multitudes into an impassioned movement, towards the closest goal: but the sobered multitudes pause.

They pause discouraged by the emptiness of the empty result. The perseverance of courage is not in the act of arriving, but in the certitude of being right.

We don't need a sign-post to show us that we have traveled a third, a fourth, a hundredth of the way; nothing measures the quantity of our effort and such markings have no relation to our effort as a whole. We please ourselves to know that we give, according to our strengths and in the direction that we believe is best, all that we can give.

We believe in a constant evolution, we therefore know that there is no end. It is enough for us to always go forward, always on the correct path. And the packs may bark after us, and we may be the crazy ones, the bad ones, the majority

brink of an abyss who wants to hear talk of flying away? When destruction is recruited under the nuclear banner, who would dare to consider it a creative joy? When technical power transforms language into an instruction manual, who can give body to the insubordination of words?

There is no need to look any further than this for the reason behind the increasing disinterest in the face of the great social utopias since 1945: the atomic reality—with its wastes that lose their radioactivity only after hundreds of thousands of years—has not only deprived us of the possibility of negating the existent, but has also deprived us of the possibility of creating it positively, because in either case it's a question of imagining the end the world or on the other hand the beginning of another world. All this has had material consequences that are not neutral. Losing the capacity for absolute negation, we also lose the capacity for thinking and imagining the very notion of the totality. The concrete threat of global annihilation and a definitive night into which we could be sunk in a single moment by the hand of some idiotic engineer has made a non-universe of the universe. When we find ourselves facing a horizon with no way of escape, we are no longer facing a horizon, but a wall. And here we are before this wall, adapted to our miserable daily reality, condemned to the most indifferent irresponsibility with regards to a world in which we no longer feel ourselves capable of doing anything.



Inasmuch as the temptation to be done with the world has passed to other side of the barricade, to the side of power and money, our force of negation has shattered, scattering itself in the order of the possible, surviving in the form of fragments. Do you want proof? The examples can be easily dug up in the things that we live through every day, in the sea of particularisms that don't seem willing to withdraw and that, rather than curbing the process of generalized indistinctness, accelerate it to the point of enclosing us in a circuit of interchangeable causes (women's rights, environmentalism, gay liberation, minimum wage: it is worthless to go on at length about the minimal importance of these particular causes). If one then passes from the ambit of social struggles to that of ideas, it becomes difficult to remain unimpressed by the way in which the exaltation of the fragmented on the part of the intellectual rabble—a contemporary phenomenon in the grip of the nuclear reality—seems to have come expressly in order to confirm the exclusion of the totality as a category of thought. It's as if our critical modernity has had the obstruction of thought as its real aim, starting from the annulment of the subject in order to come in the end to the different undertakings of deconstruction, linguistically simulating the atomic disintegration of beings and things.

Are we still able to measure the extent of the resignation that is guaranteed to us when it is claimed that we can't speak about a part without the whole? Here we are, reduced in advance to being less than what we are. Are we aware of the vital space that is torn from us when it is declared that singularity can never illuminate the totality? If singularity starts out as merely a fragment, it nonetheless has the curious ability not to remain such. The least contact with that which surrounds it is enough to set the whole landscape on fire. In order to make singularity a fragment that refers only to itself with no relationship to that which surrounds it, it became in its time a fragment in the midst of many others. Do we finally understand the boorish irresponsibility of a world that deprives itself in advance of the possibility of meaning through this deliberate refusal to



conceive of the totality?

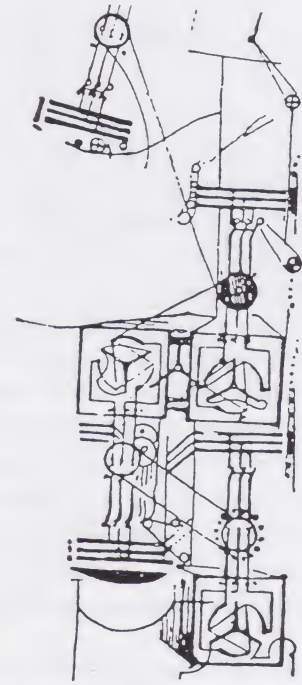
Not that I deplore the loss of a meaningful generator of values and the confusionism that follows from this as do many prudent people today. Perhaps it would be necessary to remind oneself that there has never been a given meaning to discover or a found meaning to give, least of all by becoming entangled on the paths of ideology or of gnosis. I even admit that the vibrant calls to safeguard the world and humanity from impending disaster do not find any echo in me. In my eyes, this humanitarianism of the final moment possesses something even more repugnant than institutional humanitarianism. As though it were not enough to have symbolically and materially exploited, plundered, massacred the natural environment and human beings. When, due to the boomerang effect, it is now a question of concretely paying the consequences of this, one then thinks to get oneself out of it by using and abusing the worst humanitarian rhetoric without realizing that one only fools oneself in this game.

After all, isn't it precisely this humanitarian sort of culture and civilization the type that, in the course of a few years, generated the stalinist and nazi extermination camps as well as Hiroshima? And it's not a question of figuring out whether art is possible after Auschwitz, as many have claimed, so much as looking for what about this civilization has made Auschwitz possible. Rather, anyone who persists in thinking that it is the sleep of reason, rather than the very state of the wakefulness of reason, that has generated monsters, anyone who persists in denouncing the bad use of technics rather than the technics themselves with their pathetic claims to solve every problem and free the human being from the effort of living, only helps to further tighten the noose that binds us to the present world.

If in the first half of the 20th century, the "life beyond our days" could appear within our reach, today this thirst for the dawn has been lost in a radioactive cloud. Now that our days on this earth might not be so numerous nor particularly susceptible to change, it seems that there is nothing left to do but beg for life here. Thus it is not difficult to measure the regression that has taken place on the pathway to utopia in the course of a few decades. In a world in which, as some have rightly maintained, survival of the species has become a revolutionary demand, revolutionaries have reduced themselves to demanding nothing beyond the continuation of the species. A question of common sense, no doubt. If someone wants to transform the world it is indeed necessary that it still exist. This is how the struggle for survival has come to replace the struggle for freedom without limits.

But once we've started along this decline, can we be amazed at the baseness of desires that are satisfied with a house, a car or an organized cruise? Perhaps in the name of a mythical past into which we continue to place all that we notice ourselves to be lacking even though we have never experienced it in the first person? Human community, the taste food once had, wild nature, the smell of books printed with a printing press, the skill of the old crafts and all the other pleasant, nostalgic longings of anyone who would like to go to sleep at night with the certainty of finding that when she wakes up in the morning the world will be as he left it. If it were this way, the radioactive wind would have nothing to do except raise the dust we have already become.

In the face of the humanitarian bleating that increasingly deafens us as the ritual chant that accompanies each new catastrophe, I cannot keep myself from confirming my unaltered confidence in that force of negation that constitutes the only energy with which desire irradiates me. And if I cannot hide the fact that in these last few decades there has not been a single day in which I have not seen the hope for an "overturning of standards" deteriorate, this only serves to verify the extent to which the human condition is currently suppressed. After the day of universal judgment, the last day of the earth must no longer inspire fear in us, because all the disasters of Tokaimura will not succeed in contaminating the meaning of an ancient battle-cry: freedom or death.



may stand in our way, atavism, heredity may want to impose its ineluctable laws, the group may defend itself harshly, though the end may be far, very far, these things do not concern us.

We go on... employing all means, in turn persuasive and violent. We are ready to come together with anyone and with everyone for the attainment of universal happiness and for the normal development of the unique.

We go on...Each effort brings joy in itself and every day sees its stopping place, even if advancement is slight.

We go on...We are not sure to arrive, we are mindful that we have done everything and to be ready to do anything to be right, and hence to arrive.

And it is this that makes us the strongest...that we are never weary.

We go on...



# AT THE CENTER OF THE VOLCANO

by Dominique Maisein

Although put to a difficult test by the multiple catastrophes that weigh upon humanity, the deep-seated conviction that all History has developed following a progressive route that is more or less constant if not really regular endures in its mind. This idea of progressive evolution is not an odd opinion if it is true, as it is true, that having left the caves we have now reached the point of traveling in space. Today is better than yesterday—and worse than tomorrow. But what was the point of departure for this unstoppable course? One of the fathers of cultural anthropology, L.H. Morgan, in his study on the lines of human progress from the savage state to civilization, divides the history of humanity into three stages: the primitive state, the stage of barbarism and that of civilization. Morgan claims that this last stage began with the invention of a phonetic alphabet and with the spread of writing. “In the beginning was the Word” the Bible says. It has been discourse that has facilitated the course of humanity, allowing it to conjecture, argue, retort, discuss, agree, conclude. Without discourse the tower of Babel of the human community could not have been built. In the persuasive force of the word, Reason manifests itself and thus becomes the technique for the creation and government of the world, making sure that human beings do not wear themselves out in turn, but rather contrive an understanding in the way deemed best. And Reason, as a Roman sage said, is the only thing by which “we distinguish ourselves from the brutes.”

Dante used the same expression to distinguish animals that were not rational from the human being who was: “it is evident that to live as animals is to feel—*animals*, I say, *brutes*—to live as a man is to use reason.” Indeed, humans themselves can also live like “brutes” when they renounce the prerogatives that the Tuscan poet considers typical of the human being and the source of his greatness. Effectively, all philosophy teaches that the human being is different from animals because he is gifted with reason. If he limited himself to the satisfaction of her physiological needs, nothing would separate him from the rest of the fauna, and life on this planet would still be holding steady in prehistorical conditions. But this is not the case. And this modification, that is the evolutionary process, is seen as an ascent. The human being now walks erect and challenges the heavens while the animals for the most part continue to graze the soil. This is why it is thought that animals are guided by Instinct—which leads them to preserve themselves and seek what is most beneficial—considered as *the lowness of the belly*; while humans are guided by Reason—which leads them to pursue the just and the

useful—that is seated at *the crown of the head*.

And Reason, as the ancient Greeks said, is common to all and universal. Therefore, Reason is One. But *who* determines it? And, above all, what happens if someone opposes it, not wanting to follow it because she has other reasons that he does not intend to renounce? If reason is manifested through discourse, what happens when we don't have the words to express that which enlivens us? The world in which we live is a universe closed in on itself to such an extent that it cannot tolerate that which escapes it, being capable of accepting only that which is included in its cognitive and normative schemas, and so it ends confining that which it cannot explain within the limits of madness, barbarism and irrational utopia.

Even social critique—understood not only in its mere theoretical expression, but also in its practical realization—has known its brutality, a stage in which the struggle against the social order provoked by dissatisfaction with one's own wretched condition had not yet developed an articulated form through projectual activity, but rather assumed the form of sporadic revolts lacking

theoretical motivations and only aimed at immediate satisfaction. In other words, when the vessel overflowed, a blind violence broke loose, that, though it was able to identify the enemy, was not yet able to *express its reasons*. And because of this, as soon as the rage calmed down, the situation returned to normal. As with the human being, so also with the social critique, it is possible to point to a moment of departure when instinct abandons its place to reason.

In the first half of the 19th century one witnesses the last great “senseless” revolt (luddism) and the appearance of the political project that, without forgetting its illustrious predecessors, would require the intervention of Marx and Engels to be fully developed. The year 1848 was not only the year of the great social upheavals that passed throughout Europe, but also the year in which the *Communist Manifesto* saw the light of day. The desire to change the world came out of the cave, dissolved a great part of its mystical and idealistic characteristics in order to acquire its own rationality and become social science. It was not by chance that Engels, in the preface to the English edition of the *Manifesto* published in 1888, would describe radical social



movements before 1848 as supportive of “a crude, rough-hewn, purely instinctive form of communism.”

Convinced of the fatuity of thoughtless outbursts of hatred, the struggle for freedom elaborates its programs, its strategies, and starts to advocate the subversion of the entire society and its rebuilding on other foundations. Scientific communism and all its variants are born, as is the anarchist movement. For 150 years, authoritarian communists and anarchists have both seen the *seizure of consciousness* as the fundamental condition for every social change. While the authoritarians have aspired to impose this consciousness from above through their political organizations on a proletariat that was prepared for it, the anarchists have tried to make it rise up spontaneously through propaganda or example. Millions of writings have been distributed with this aim, in the form of newspapers, journals, books, pamphlets, posters, leaflets; conferences, demonstrations and initiatives have been organized, and committees and associations constituted; not to mention all the social struggles and individual and collective actions carried out against institutions. In the heart of every revolutionary there was a great deal of hope. There was the certainty that all this activity would sooner or later lead to the awakening of this consciousness in the exploited that would finally make the revolution possible. The reason of Freedom—still thought of as *one*, common to all and universal—would take the place of the reason of Power that had usurped its legitimacy.

Today we know that this determinist process was only an illusion. History does not *inevitably* go anywhere. And however that may be, power has not stopped paying attention. If once the exploited were moved at the mere mention of the word “strike”; if they gathered together in every city, country, factory or quarter because

life itself was the collective life of the class; if the life of the oppressed had included daily discussions of the conditions of existence and struggle for so many years; if in spite of the heterogeneity of this consciousness, they discussed the necessity of destroying capitalism, of building a new society without exploited or exploiters, everywhere; it is undeniable that, in the course of the last several decades, all this has disappeared together with the so much dreaded “proletariat”—considered as a class, vision of the world opposed to that of Capital.



Not by chance. Capital has applied itself to reaching the point where it can build an ideal society in which the enemy no longer exists, but where only productive, good citizens live possibly along with humanoids capable of reproducing society without posing questions. In the face of the danger represented by revolutionary *reason*, a dense group of flatterers—philosophers, artists, writers, linguists, sociologists, psychoanalysts, historians—has devoted itself to draining this reason of all meaning. The “end of History” means that there is no longer any future one can claim to have an influence: the instant, this abstract, artificial pulsation, disconnected from duration, is elevated to the rank of supreme application. In a time without depth, the thing is overcome

by the appearance, the content withdraws before the empty form, choice gives way to automatism, the individual abdicates her autonomy. Thus, he finds herself wallowing once again in the oppressive emptiness of advertising posters that render the Absence somewhat attractive. The reason of the state has remained, only to endure and manage, and this is the one thing that the ecclesiastics of post-modernism have never dreamed of placing into discussion.

In this way, power has tried to preventatively erase the reasons of the revolutionaries. And not only the great reasons—Communism or Anarchy—but the smallest and simplest ones as well, those that mark the daily life of every exploited person allowing him to be aware of what she wants and why he wants it, making her capable of distinguishing the rich from the poor, the police from the prisoner, the violence of the state from that of the rebel, charity from solidarity. But of the intent was to put an end to rebellion forever, something has not worked. Revolts continue to break out. What characterizes them is the fact that there is no visible quantitative progression before the explosion; the dimensions grow to the highest level without being preceded by great partial struggles. Their spark is not the promise of a future freedom but the awareness of a present misery, which, when not economic, is certainly emotional. Now, revolt has no more reasons to put forward, it is without precise and explicit objectives and rarely proposes anything pro-positive. The point of departure is a general negation in which economic, political, social and daily life aspects are blended. Now revolt is characterized by the violent and resolute action of insurgents who occupy the streets and clash violently with all the organs of the state, and *also among themselves*. We are at the threshold of civil war, we are already in civil war.





**THERMOMETER ISLAND**, somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean, so called because the laws of the country allow couples to sleep with each other only if the sexes of both husband and wife, measured with special thermometers, have reached the same temperature. The sexual organs of the male inhabitants have curious shapes—parallelepipeds, pyramids, cylinders—and correspond exactly to those of the female islanders. The queen of the island is elected from among those women who are the quickest in measuring the temperature of their own and their partners' sex; this dexterity is highly honoured on the island.

The islanders are born with the visible signs of their vocation: in this way each one is what he should be. Those destined to the science of geometry are born with fingers in the form of a compass; someone who is to be an astronomer is born with eyes in the form of telescopes; geographers are born with heads like terrestrial globes; musicians with hornlike ears; hydraulic engineers with testicles like water pumps and they are capable from an early age of urinating in long jets. Certain inhabitants who are born with several of these characteristics combined have proved in later life to be in fact good for nothing.

Visitors will be interested in a curious instrument found only on this island, a harpsichord that instead of producing sounds produces colours and is used by the ladies to find harmonious combinations for their dresses.

(Denis Diderot, *Les Bijoux indiscrets*, Paris, 1748)

The very fact that revolt can assume the form of an unforeseen explosion brings out an element of important force: the surprise effect. The old reformist social democratic arsenal is disarmed in the face of the actions of insurgents. Syndicalism also finds itself completely unable to respond and incorporate the violence into itself. Social workers and all state agents of social mediation generally find themselves completely overwhelmed. The absence of precise demands renders the work of recuperation even more difficult, and there is nothing left for these people to do but denigrate those who don't hesitate by referring to the "autism of the rebels." But it is not just the counselors of the king who are dismayed. Revolutionaries as well, who have been accustomed for years to the constant repetition of the concept that the revolution "has nothing in common with the explosion of a powder barrel", find themselves displaced, taken unawares. How do you reason with one who has no reasons? How do you discuss with one who has no words? The revolt may be fierce, but it is not currently able to make distinctions that require an analysis. Any one of us could find ourselves in the position of the truck driver who was beaten and attacked with stones in the course of the revolt in Los Angeles in 1992.

**The rooster constrained in the narrowness of the stall, surrounded by horses, with no other bedding at hand, was compelled to seek out a place on the treacherous floor with horse tramping all around. Being in serious danger for his fragile life, the rooster put forth the following prudent invitation: "I beg you, gentlemen, let us seek to keep ourselves steady on our feet; I fear that otherwise we may trample one another."**

With the lantern of our more or less critical awareness, we wander about

in the vain attempt to illuminate the black night that surrounds us today. All the texts that we have read are proving inadequate, incapable of providing us with a thread to lead us out of this labyrinth. When daily events present themselves before us, we are no longer capable of deciphering them. Revolts continue to break out around the world, but not a trace of them appears in our handbooks. Thus, when we come to denigrate the bad insurrection in Albania [1997—translator] and applaud the good revolt in Seattle, following the suggestion of a reason stuffed with bookish notions, we don't act so very differently from the rooster of the fable: we counsel everyone to hold themselves steady. At last, a revolt as it should be! That all the insurgents of the world take as a model!

Thus, we see once again how the requirement put forward by revolutionaries in the course of history has always been almost exclusively of the logical type, which is to say normative. And the norm, the reason consistent with itself, does its best to compel reality to conform itself to it. But reality escapes from it, because no ideology is in a position to exhaust it. In spite of our best intentions, nothing guarantees that the revolt of Seattle becomes a model. In fact, it seems that the wind is blowing the other way.

For years, we have upheld the virtue of reason as the sole guide of our actions, and now we find ourselves with little or nothing in hand. In the search for a way of escape from the absurdity that threatens our existence, it is difficult to resist the temptation to reverse direction and turn our attention to that which is usually considered as the antipode of reason, namely, *passion*. After all, there are already those who have made the rediscovery of the passions one of the most dangerous arms in the attack against the world of authority and money. We can dust off the old texts



of Bakunin and Coeurderoy, the anarchists from the 19th century who exalted the “unchaining of the wicked passions” and “revolution as the work of the Cossacks”.

Let’s listen to the shattering voice of Coeurderoy: “...we have no hope except in the human deluge; we have no future except in chaos; we have no expedient except in general war that, mixing all the races and shattering all stable relationships, will remove the tools from the hands of the ruling class with which it violates the freedom required at the price of blood. We establish a revolution in action, we inspire it in foundations; so that it is inoculated through the sword into the organism of society, in a way that none could any longer escape from it! So that the human tide mounts and overflows. When all the disinherited will be taken with hunger, property will no longer be a sacred thing; in the clash of arms, the sword will resound more strongly than money; when everyone will fight for his own cause, no one will have any more need to be represented; in the midst of the confusion of tongues, the lawyers, the journalists, the dictators of opinion will lose their speech. Between its steel fingers, the revolution shatters all the Gordian knots; it is without compromise with privilege, without pity for hypocrisy, without fear in battle, without restraint on the passions, ardent with its lovers, implacable with its enemies. By god! Let’s do it then and sing its praises like the mariner sings the great caprices of the sea, his master!”

Claiming chaos after having futilely tried to set things in order for years. Exalting barbarism after we have identified it for so long with capitalism. It might even seem contradictory, but in doing so, don’t we perhaps feel that much nearer to the goal?

And yet, if we think it over well, it is odd that in order to advance the thesis that wants barbarism to be not

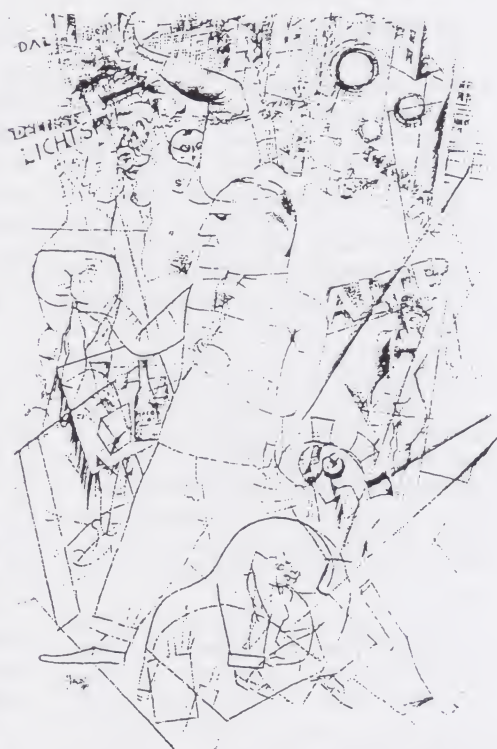
only that which most inspires fear in us, but also a possibility on which to wager, one must appeal to such forerunners. As if we felt ourselves at fault and thus in need of finding new justifications behind which to hide our doubts and insecurities. But then, what is served by dedicating ourselves to making analyses of the profound changes that the social structure has undergone, illustrating the technological restructuring of capital, exposing the atomization of the production system, taking action for the end of the great ideologies, stemming the decline of meaning, lamenting the degradation of language, etc., etc.? Reason after reason, analysis after analysis, citation after citation, perhaps all that we have done is raise yet another insurmountable wall, in a position to protect us if not from external reality, at least from ourselves.

### **If reason is a compass, the passions are the winds**

In reality, we are the victims of a great deception, designed by ourselves, when we appropriate the texts of a Bakunin or a Coeurderoy in order to alleviate the burning sensation left by the disappointment caused by the breakdown of every great social project. We don’t take into proper consideration that these anarchists are not our contemporaries, have not witnessed the fall of the Berlin wall, have not lived in the era of the Internet. We propose their ideas again, but avoid reflecting motives that moved them—in a historical context completely different from the one in which we live today—to place their hope for a radical transformation not in adherence to an ideal program, but in the wild irruption of the darkest human forces. Thus, we can leave for the pigs so many questions on why—as Coeurderoy said—“the social revolution can no longer be made through a partial initiative, the easy way, through the Good. It is

necessary that Humanity deliver itself through a general revolt, through a counter-strike, through Evil.”

Better to dress the old certitudes up in new clothes than to rid ourselves of them. Better to look at ourselves in the mirror that reflects the image of a civilized and thinking individual, even though inside a free and savage barbarian is on the lookout only waiting for the propitious occasion to show itself. If one can no longer have faith in the virtue of progress, better to swear on the genuine and spontaneous substantial nature of the individual upon which civilization has



superimposed its vulgar social conventions through the course of the centuries. But isn’t this also an ideological projection, an updated version of the sun of the future that will sooner or later rise behind the peaks as if by magic? And the problem does not only consist in not knowing whether there even is a human nature uncontaminated by television that could be rediscovered, or whether the human unconscious could be reclaimed from the poisoning of Capital.





**DIONYSUS' ISLAND**, in the Atlantic Ocean, some eighty days from the Columns of Hercules. Travellers who have seen it describe it as high and wooded. Its name can be explained by the traces left here by the ancient Greek god of wine. For instance, some distance from the coast is a bronze column inscribed in somewhat faded Greek characters: "Up to here travelled Hercules and Dionysus." Somewhat farther inland runs a river of wine, similar to that of Chio, so wide that in certain parts it can be navigated. Following it to its source, one does not—despite one's expectations—reach a fountain, but a small wood of large vines whose rich grapes distil drops of red wine that eventually form the river. The fish in the river have the colour and the taste of wine, and when caught are found to be full of sediment.

All around the island grows another species of vine with large and robust trunks that are women from the waist upwards. These women grow tendrils and clusters of grapes from the tips of their fingers and their hair is made of leaves, stems and tendrils. Some speak Lydian or Hindu but most of them speak Greek. If the grapes are plucked from them they cry out in pain. Travellers are advised not to let themselves be embraced by these arborescent creatures—they will become at once inebriated and fall into a swoon, forgetting family, honour and fatherland. Whoever has intercourse with one of them is immediately transformed into a vine, sprouting roots on the spot.

(Lucian of Samosata, *True History*, 2nd cen. AD)

In fact, in spite of appearances, the texts of Bakunin and Coeurderoy are the fruit of a perfectly logical reasoning. The aim one wants to achieve determines the means to be used. If our goal was to redeal the cards in the game, one could easily present a rational argument for what means to use. It would be understood that each in their turn should hold the bank. But if our objective is to destroy the game itself, with all its rules, its cards and the players who take part in it, then things change. In other words, if our desires would limited themselves to the replacement of a ruling class, the restoration of areas presently not in use, a reduction in prices, the lowering of interest rates, better ventilation of prison cells and whatever else as well, it would remain in the ambit of rational possibility. If instead we want to put an end to the world as we know it and consequently enter into a world that is utterly fantastic to imagine, then we are facing a project considered impossible, extraordinary, superhuman, that requires impossible, extraordinary, superhuman means in order to be realized. A revolt weighed in the balance of convenience, with the eye attentive to the advantages and disadvantages at every step, is defeated from the start, because it can only advance to a certain point and then stop. From the point of view of logic, it is always better to find a compromise than to fight. It is not reasonable for an exploited person to rebel against society, because she will be overpowered by it. The barricade may still have its charm, but it's useless to hide that many will meet their death there. And no one knows in advance in whose chest the bullet will stop.

This is why the only allies left are the passions, those wicked passions to which everything is possible, even the impossible. Bakunin and Coeurderoy understood this. One cannot make revolution with good sense. Only passion is capable of overwhelming

the human mind, carrying it toward unthinkable ends, arming it with invincible strength. Only individuals who have gone "out of their mind", on whom reason no longer exercises any control, are capable of accomplishing the undertakings necessary to the destruction of an age-old ruling order. As we can see, it is not a question of *converting* as many people as possible to an ideal deemed just, but of stirring them up since—as an old anarchist loved to say: "it is normal that people very much share the qualities of coal: an inconvenient and filthy mass when extinguished; luminous and fiery when ignited."

But the ardor of the passions doesn't last long, it is fleeting, just like the current revolts. It is an intoxication that thrust beyond itself, but that is slept off by morning. One can gather from this that if reason alone is not able to guide us toward freedom, neither is passion alone. But no one has ever claimed such a thing. Here we are before the consequences of a misunderstanding that occurs when one opposes a supposedly irrational passion to a presumably indifferent reason, generating an antithesis that does not exist in reality. Because, far from being rash and unreflective, passion is quite capable of taking time and giving itself a perspective in order to achieve its goal. Just as the acrobatics of reason often only serve to justify the outcome of our passions after the fact. Perhaps nothing has shown how logic and passion complete each other, interpenetrate each other and contain each other in turn like the work of Sade with its continuous linking together of orgiastic scenes with philosophical argumentation. Compass and winds are both indispensable. Whatever voyage one means to undertake, one cannot do without either one of these. This is why Bakunin invoked the fury, but also spoke of the need for an "invisible pilot." Now however the



point is that it is not possible to pilot a tempest. One can only endure it.

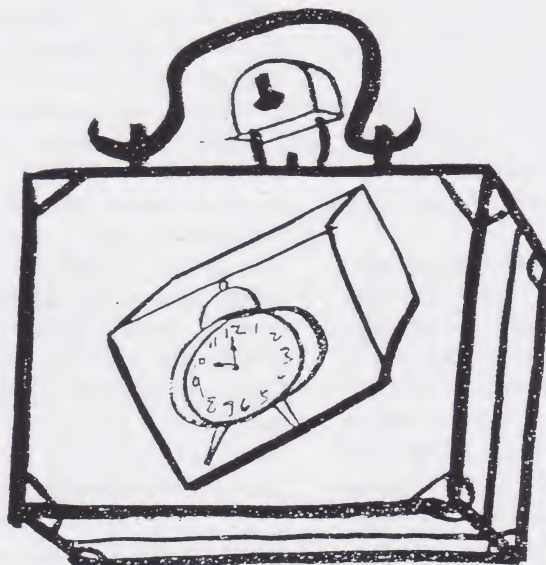
**"The violent revolution that we felt rising for some years and that I had personally desired so much passed before my window, before my eyes, and it found me confused, incredulous. [...] The first three months were the worst. Like many others I was one obsessed by the terrible loss of control. I, who had desired the subversion, the overturning of the established order, with all my might, indeed I, now at the center of the volcano, I abhor the summary executions, the pillage, all the acts of banditry. I was torn as always between the theoretical and emotional attraction for the disorder and the basic need for order and peace."**

—Luis Bunuel

It is not only the political and economic person, worried about electoral and commodity markets, who takes the field against the tempest, against the chaos and the primordial forces of barbarism, but, above all, the ethical person. To repudiate social norms, to abandon oneself to the instincts means to fall back into the darkness of wildness to the point of reviving the horrors of the primordial horde. Civilization, then, could only be Reason, Order, Law, and not necessarily those of the State. Bakunin's comrades in Lyon don't fail to reproach for this. One of them will remember how conflicts broke out between them "the principle cause of which was Bakunin's great theory on the necessity of allowing all the passions, all the appetites, all the wrath of the people to manifest themselves and to freely rumble unchained, free of the muzzle." There was one comrade in particular who "did not view this possible deluge of violence of the human beast" and "condemned every sort of crime and abomination, which would give the revolution a sinister countenance, rob

the greatness of the idea through the brutishness of the instincts, rising against all those who have love in their hearts for the great things and whose consciousness has a sense of the just and the good." How is it possible—he asked—"that people who represent the idea of the future could have the right to defile through contact with the most ancient barbarism which the most elementary civilizations seek to repress?"

respect for the determinist mechanism which is considered the motor of history? It is a mystification, however, to paint a situation of anomie—that is to say, of an absence or great weakening of the norms that rule the conduct of individuals—with the darkest hues. It is yet to be demonstrated that inside the individual a monster quick to torture innocents is concealed. In reality this is merely a hypothesis—as often



The observations of this comrade of Bakunin have made much more headway than the texts of the Russian anarchist. The proof of it is the oblivion to which these latter have been relegated together with those of Coeurderoy. Barbarism cannot be the door to freedom, so we are reminded by those ethical people who, for the most part, are the very same ones who on other occasions have found ways of affirming that war produces peace, the rich preserve the poor, force guarantees equality. So what can open the door to freedom? Perhaps the expansion of markets? An increase in the number of parties? The consolidation in the forces of order? A better scholastic education? The general strike? A revolutionary organization with a million members? The development of the productive forces? And why ever, if not out of

refuted as affirmed by historical experience—spread to benefit those who rule, decide and impose. Nevertheless, even if it were so, could one perhaps decide beforehand which direction a situation of anomie would assume?

A mariner who sings of the force of the sea is not likely to exalt the beauty of shipwreck with it. In the same way, recognizing the role developed in every process of social transformation for the passions, even for the darkest ones, does not mean making a defense for rape, the bloodbath or lynching. There is no use in hiding that every revolution has known its excesses. However, this does not mean either renouncing revolution for fear that these will happen, as the so-called beautiful souls always claimed, nor cheerfully taking part in them. Because the people unchain even their



wicked passions that have been repressed for far too long. In this, the revolutionaries will hardly be at their side. Indeed, one presumes that they have quite different things to do than shut themselves up in their house or lose themselves in the midst of a howling marasmus. Even in the midst of the tempest, the mariner who knows where he wants to go always has his eye on the compass and his hand on the rudder—and in his heart the hope that he can exploit the force of the water as much as possible in order to arrive at his destination and have his embarkation prearranged because he endures all the blows of the billows. Without any certainty of rescue, naturally, but without giving it up in advance.

The reflections of Bakunin and Coeurderoy—that some would describe as meta-historical and that, as we have seen, have not roused much agreement among revolutionaries—have found unwonted support in the conclusions that some observers of human behavior have drawn. When Bakunin speaks of the revolution as a *festival* in which the participants are overwhelmed by intoxication (“some from mad terror, others from mad ecstasy”) and where it seems that “the whole world was turned upside down, the incredible had become familiar, the impossible possible, and the possible and familiar senseless,” this is taken literally.

For example, Roger Caillois, in his essay that analyzes the meaning that the festival has had in different types of human society, speaks of the “contagion of an exaltation...that prompts one to abandon oneself, without control, to the most irrational impulses.” Describing it as “intermittent explosion”, the French scholar explains how the festival “appears to the individual as another world, where he feels himself supported and transformed by the forces that overcome him.” His aim is that of “beginning the creation of the

world again.” “The cosmos has emerged from the chaos”—Caillois writes—according to which the human being looks with nostalgia at a world that didn’t know the hardship of work, where the desires were realized without finding themselves mutilated by any social prohibition. The Golden Age answers to this conception of a world without war and without commerce, without slavery and without private property. “But this world of light, of serene joy, of a simple and happy life”—Caillois clarifies further—“is at the same time a world of exuberant and disorderly creations, of monstrous and excessive fruitions.”

The innovation of barbarism, if so we choose to call it, is found in the fact that it invites us neither to slaughter, torture or slit throats, nor to imagine an egalitarian and happy society. In the explosion of its frenzy, barbarism proposes to us that we courageously rise to the dangerous, even unacceptable and anti-social, side of ourselves. From birth, we have found ourselves projected into an ethico-surgical social system, the purpose of which is to perform the maximum number of amputations on us in the name of the maximum level of order. Facing barbarism, we only have to give an answer to the basic question of our fullness.

**It is no longer necessary to rely on goodwill or special favors. One can no longer pay ransom to the chief of purgatory, nor oil the palm of the guardian of hell; there is no longer a paradise where one could secure a seat in advance.**

—Rene Daumal

The world in which we live is a prison, the sections of which are called Work, Money, Commodity, and the yard time of which is granted as summer vacation. We were born and have always lived inside this prison universe. Hence, it is all we know. It is our nightmare and our

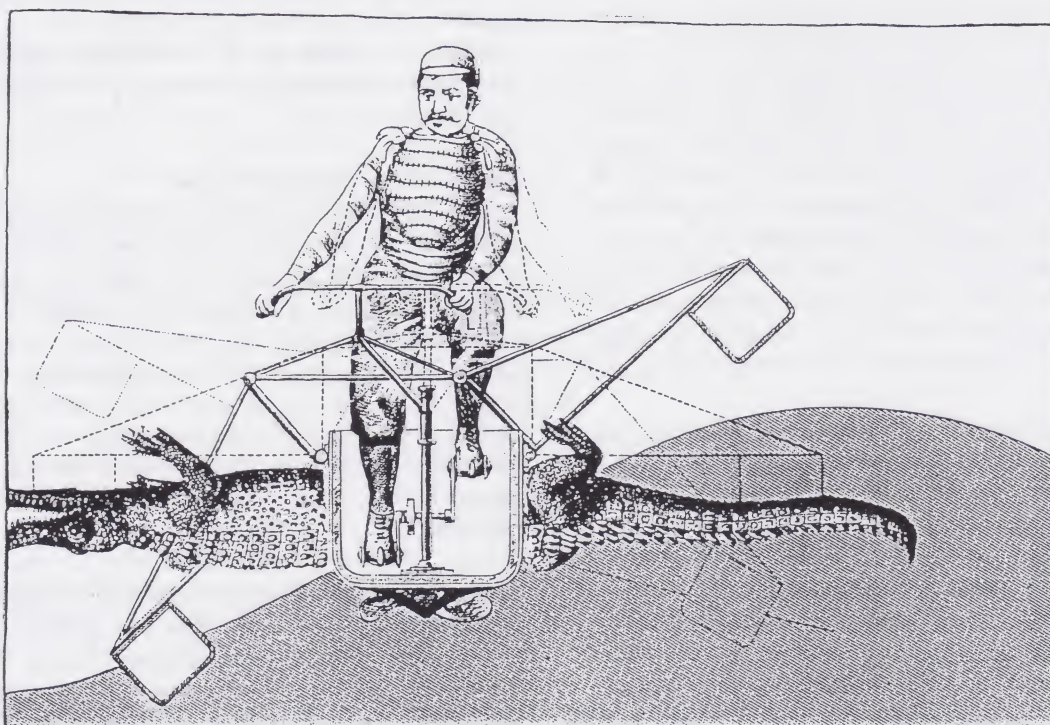
security at the same time. And yet. As every prisoner knows well, our heart has counted the steps that separate us from the wall thousands and thousands of times, afterwards calculating the meters of bricks that it is necessary to climb. As every prisoner knows well, our eyes have scrutinized that thin line on the horizon that divides the barbed wire from the sky thousands and thousands of times so that we can then muse on the forms and colors that we glimpse dimly there. But we don’t know what is there beyond the wall of this enclosure. Perhaps a marvelous landscape. Perhaps a dangerous jungle. Perhaps both. Every proposed conjecture is a lie. Certainly, there is freedom, *whatever that may be*. Once conquered, it is up to us to know how to maintain it and be able to take pleasure in it. It is up to us, as well, if we so choose, to renounce it, but not before we have tried it.

Now more than ever, it is time for defiance. To think one can escape from daily life is madness. And, besides, a solitary escapee would end up living a miserable life. But wanting to utterly destroy the prison in order to liberate everyone is a barbarity. By what right do we interfere in the lives of others? And yet. And yet, there is a point at which the desperation and anguish of having only incomplete and temporary prospects overturn in the determination to be oneself without delay, identify means and ends and found the sovereignty of revolt on nothing. When we arrive at this point, if we are not already there, will we know what to do? Or will we retreat in order to return to that which we know too well?





# The Anarchist Ethic in the Age of the Anti-Globalization Movement



The question always before anarchists is how to act in the present moment of struggle. As new forms of social struggles are becoming more clearly understood, this question becomes even more important. In order to answer these questions we have to clarify the relationship between anarchists and the wider social movement of the exploited and the nature of that movement itself. First of all, we need to note that the movement of the exploited is always in course. There is no use in anarchists, who wish to destroy capitalism and the state in their entirety, waiting to act on some future date, as predicted by an objectivist reading of capitalism or a determinist understanding of history as if one were reading the stars. This is the most secure way of keeping us locked in the present forever. The revolutionary movement of the exploited multitude never totally disappears, no matter how hidden it is. Above all this is a movement to destroy the separation between us, the exploited, and our conditions of existence, that which we need to live. It is a movement of society against the state. We can see this movement, however incoherent or unconscious, in the actions of Brazil's peasants who take the land they need to survive, when the poor steal, or when someone attacks the state that maintains the system of exclusion and exploitation. We can see this movement in the actions of those who attack the machinery that destroys our very life-giving environment. Within this current, anarchists are a minority. And, as conscious anarchists, we don't stand outside the movement, propagandizing and organizing it; we act with this current, helping to reanimate and sharpen its struggles.

It is instructive to look back at the recent history of this current. In the U.S., beginning in the 1970s, social movements began to fracture into single-issue struggles that left the totality of social relations unchallenged. In many ways, this was reflected in a shift in the form of imposed social relations, which occurred in response to the struggles of the 1960s and early 1970, and is marked by a shift from a Fordist regime of accumulation (dominated by large factories and a mediated truce with unions) to a regime of flexible accumulation (which began to break unions, dismantle the welfare state, and open borders to the free flow of capital). This shift is also mirrored by the academic shift to postmodernist theory, which privileges the fractured, the floating, and the flexible. While the growth of single-issue groups signals the defeat of the anti-capitalist struggles of the 1960s, over the 1990s we have witnessed a reconvergence of struggles that are beginning to challenge capitalism as a totality. Thus the



revolutionary current of the exploited and excluded has recently reemerged in a cycle of confrontations that began in the third world and have spread to the first world of London, Seattle, and Prague, and in the direct action movement that has, for the most part, grown out of the radical environmental milieu. In the spectacular confrontations of the global days of action, these streams have been converging into a powerful social force. The key to this reconvergence is that the new struggles of the 1990s are creating ways to communicate and link local and particular struggles without building stifling organizations that attempt to synthesize all struggle under their command. Fundamental to this movement is an ethic that stands against all that separates us from our conditions of existence and all that separates us from our power to transform the world and to create social relations beyond measure—a measure imposed from above. This ethic is a call for the self-organization of freedom, the self-valorization of human activity.

In this article we will outline our understanding of the ethic of the revolutionary anarchist current of society that grows out of the movement of the exploited in general. Then we will turn to the question of action and organization, looking critically at the forms of struggle that are appearing in the recent cycle of social movements and arguing that informal organization is the best way for anarchists to organize as a minority within the wider social movement. By organizing along these lines, we believe anarchists can sharpen the level of struggle and develop social relations in practice that are both antagonistic to capital and the state and begin to create of new ways of living.

### Ethic and morality

We use the term *ethic* in a very specific sense and contrast it to *morality*. Morality stands outside what it rules over, it swoops down from above to organize relationships and discipline behavior. For example, the relationship between two people can be set morally by a third party, the church, the state, or the school. This third party is not a part of the relationship; in other words, it stands *transcendent* to the relationship. The relationship between two people can also be arranged through an ethic. Unlike morality, an ethic never comes from the outside; an ethic lets us understand how to relate to other people or objects, other bodies, in a way that is beneficial to us. An ethic is thus a doctrine of happiness, one which never comes from the outside of the situation, which never stands above a relationship, but is always developed from within; it is always *immanent* to the situation instead of *transcendent* to it. An ethic is a relationship of desire. In an ethical relationship desire is complemented by desire, expanded by it. Morality, on the other hand, always limits and channels desire. A transcendent morality is alien to the situation at hand; its logic has no necessary connection to the desire of those involved or to increasing their pleasure. It is a fixed law whose reasoning is always "because I said so," "because it is the word of god," "because it is wrong," or "because it is the law and what would happen without the law." An ethic is a tool for the active creation of our own lives; it is never an imposed decision, a bought position in society, or a passively accepted role that we attempt to play. The most valuable thing

one can learn in the struggle against imposed decision is how to act, how to become more powerful in our action.

Anarchism is an ethic in the most basic sense: it is an ethic because it calls for decisions to remain immanent to the situation at hand instead of alienated into a transcendent institution, it moves in an antagonistic relationship to all transcendent morality and institutions, such as the state, the party and the church.

### Power and the alienation of power

Human nature has been a foundational concept for many anarchists. As such, the argument runs, human nature is good and power, which constricts and warps that nature, is bad. Anarchism becomes a philosophy that stands for getting rid of power and allowing the good nature of humans to flourish. In this section, we develop a different understanding of power, an understanding that doesn't automatically define power as bad. Instead of setting a particular conception of human nature as the foundation of anarchism, therefore, we suggest that an ethic of desire is the proper foundation for anarchist action and organization.

Power is the potential to exert a force, the ability to create and transform. Capitalism alienates that potential from us in the production process. The state also alienates our power; in fact, *the state is a form of alienated power that has been instituted, that has been constituted in the state form*. In its alienated form, power becomes the potential and ability to make others exert a force, to do work, or the ability to prevent us from exerting a force. It is a power that has been extracted from the social body through a complex process of force and consent.

Capitalism and the state separate the moment of decision from the act of its realization in both space and time: a decision is made before the action has begun and it is made in a different place, in some office of the state, corporate boardroom, or organizer's meeting. A law can be made years before it comes to control an act. The form of alienated power tends towards fixity, of setting and maintaining an order and a set of institutions—like the heavy-set granite structures that house the institutions themselves—that stand above society; it can thus be called *constituted or transcendent power*.

If power is the potential to exert a force, the ability to act in a creative, transformative, productive, or destructive way, the state as a transcendent institution is that which cuts us off or separates us from our *active power*. Our power is alienated from us, taken from us, and instituted in the state. We are only allowed to act in certain ways, whereas the state constantly acts and decides for us, acts in our name, or forces us to act in certain ways. It cuts us off from the creative energy of desire itself.

When power has not been alienated, it remains immanent within individuals and the social body as a whole. And, so long as it is not separated from the act itself, it remains a creative, productive, and transformative potential, for it refuses a fixed order. As Kropotkin states, "Now all history, all the experience of the human race and all social psychology, unite in showing that the best and fairest way is to trust the decision to



those whom it concerns most nearly." But there is always a danger that this power will be recuperated by groups to form institutions and will become a constituted, transcendent power that stands above the social body: the revolutionary power of those struggling against capitalism and the state can be frozen in the form of 'the Party' and, finally, the state itself.

In studying primitive societies, Pierre Clastres discovered that societies without a state were really "societies against the state." They organized the social body in such a way that warded off the constitution of alienated power into an institution separate from society. Stable, conserved power is prevented from crystallizing into a hardened state form. As Delueze and Guattari point out, the state "is defined by the perpetuation or conservation of organs of power. The concern of the State is to conserve." Thus the state is the political organization of passivity. Anthropologists have noted the appearance of conserved organs of power in small-scale societies and have called such early organs 'impersonal institutions.' Impersonal institutions are distinguished from an authority that is based on personal abilities or qualities, an authority that ends when either that person dies, they are no longer seen as holding those personal abilities, or when those abilities are no longer useful to society. Someone could become known as a great hunter in a band society and trusted as an authority on hunting; that authority is vested personally in the individual. A society could have several individuals with such authority or it could have none. As such, authority does not crystallize into an institution that tends towards permanence, into impersonal institutions. But once authority comes to be institutionalized into a permanent position that is filled as an impersonal role, power begins to be conserved and separated from society itself. The President is an impersonal institution in that the authority of the Presidency continues after one President leaves and another takes their place; the authority rests in the institution.

Such impersonal institutions are openings that allow the state to slowly form above society. But the society against the state, that attempts to ward off or destroy the state, does not die as the state grows into a hardened, ugly body; in fact, the society against the state is continually reemerging and transforming its methods as the movement of the exploited and excluded to decide their own fate. The long and twisted history of the development of the state and the creative movement of the society against the state has been written and analyzed elsewhere. This history has brought us to our present moment in which the society against the state rises again. In the present moment, the form that alienated power takes is also varied: while the party dictatorship, a form that still exists, is an obvious example of alienated, transcendent power, the democratic form of alienated power no less separates decision from the act, no less separates us from our active powers.

As with the society against the state, anarchists must always fight against the alienation of power, against the formation of transcendent institutions that turn active power into a constituted order, whether that order be called democratic or totalitarian. This is not only because such transcendent power separates us from our power to act on our desires, but also because as soon as our active power—our power to transform society and to create our own lives—begins to harden into a permanent order, a permanent organization, once impersonal institutions form within our midst, we lose the power to attack the state and capitalism effectively.

### Value, measure, and social organization

The movement of the exploited, the excluded, of the society against the state, is a movement to destroy the separation between humans and their conditions of existence. It is a movement to build new social relations without measure. It is a revolt against the imposition of a single regime of value. Looking at the many struggles that are being called "the anti-globalization movement," we can see in their diversity a complex pattern of attack on and defense from capitalist valorization. These struggles are heterogeneous in that no single solution or system of valorization is being offered to replace capitalism (thus these struggles can not be contained by a single organization). Yet, while they are heterogeneous, there is a pattern, and that pattern is produced by the fact that they are all fighting a singular and hegemonic regime of valorization, capitalism, that is invading every human practice and relationship. Alienation is the gap between desire and what is socially valued, between our



**CUCCAGNA** (not to be confused with **COCKAIGNE**), a small country not far from Germany; according to some travellers, it is entered through a river. In the middle rises Mount Mecca, a volcano filled with boiling broth. From its bowels spring forth ravioli and other pasta which, rolling down its cheese-covered slopes, fall into a vale of melted butter at the mountain's foot.

In Cuccagna visitors will see monkeys playing chess, the royal family sleeping for three years at a time in a bed of sausage rolls, roast pheasants running about to the sound of trumpets, and showers of capons falling from the heavens. The soil produces truffles as large as houses, the rivers are full of milk or wine. In winter the mountains lie covered with cream cheese, and all year round delicious pastries sprout along the roads. The houses are made of all kinds of Italian food and the bridges are large salami. Coaches run on their own, with no need of horses, and trees bear all kinds of fruit.

A small fountain stands at the disposal of whoever wishes to reduce his or her age by washing in its waters. Women give birth singing and babies walk and talk immediately after being born. He who sleeps most, earns most;

he who is found working is taken straight to prison.

(Anonymous, *Capitolo di Cuccagna*, 16th cen. AD; Anonymous, *Storia del Campiano contadino*, 17th cen. AD; Anonymous, *Trionfo dei poltroni*, 17th cen. AD)



potential to transform the world and the theft and parasitic use of that power by capital and the state. As that power comes to be alienated in the state form, society comes to be increasingly ruled by numbers to the extent that humans themselves are even reduced to interchangeable numbers.

One of the state's most important roles is to be the guarantor of measure: the state maintains the value of money, the general equivalent, it sets the low point for wages, taxes, and guarantees the measure and protection of property. The state uses numbers to reduce social problems to simple math problems with solutions. But society isn't so easily quantified and reduced; society isn't just a problem that can be solved with a ruler. Thus, every solution is in reality a repression of the problem or a shifting of the problem to a new level or different sector of society. Solution and repression are a twined pair.

The largest of such social problems that states have to contend with are the distribution of wealth, the mediation of social conflicts that erupt from its unequal distribution, and the reproduction of society itself. Over this century, two solutions to the problem of the distribution of wealth, the setting of value, have dominated the world: Western capitalism and Soviet communism. Both systems separate humans from their conditions of existence, from what they need to live and follow their desires. Both systems also rely on transcendent institutions of power to maintain their systems of valorization. In the West, capitalist valorization relies on the state to guarantee the general equivalent and to maintain the private property structure that separates us from what we need to live. The human is thus split into a producer of goods for sale and a consumer of other goods. This split allows the extraction of surplus value, and it is the production of surplus value that defines one as productive, producing and, thus, having value in society.

The Soviet system was a different solution to the same problem. One's value within the Soviet system was set by a different measure. Within the Soviet system, value operated as a quantified, measured need as set by the transcendent intuition of the state. The state, as an alien institution, a form of alienated power, decided what was needed through its great, calculating bureaucratic apparatus. By treating society as a mathematical problem, the Soviet system guaranteed an equality and homogeneity of existence. It flattened desire and individuals. Desires were judged to be of social value or not by committee. Use value came to be set by a moral system that stood outside of society. In the Soviet system humans were no less separated from their conditions of existence, for a transcendent system of property still existed as the state itself directly controlled property.

There is, however, a different type of communism, one in which the institutions of private property backed up by state power are absent; this communism can be defined by the equality of access to the conditions of existence. This ethic is at the heart of the movement of the excluded, of the society against the state, that always remains antagonistic, however incoherent, to the separations that capital and the state impose upon it.

This communism offers no mathematical solution, imposed from above, to social problems. There is no guarantee of what individuals and groups will do with the conditions of existence

once they have access to them, that is up to their desires and abilities. Rather, in the absence of transcendent solutions and institutions, social relations and problems remain as tensions within society, tensions that are worked through immanently in practice. Value comes to be produced immanently in ethical practice, as a self-valorization activity by those involved in a certain situation. A single regime of value no longer covers and organizes the social terrain.

This ethic of desire, which remains fundamental to the movement of the excluded, is antagonistic to the constituted social order that separates the multitude from its conditions of existence; and, it is out of this antagonism that anarchist practice—as immanent to the movement of the excluded multitudes—grows. Just as valorization becomes an ethical practice for the excluded, informal organization, in struggle against capital and the state, becomes an ethical practice for anarchists: *both create social relations beyond measure.*



## Part II:

### The Anarchist ethic and the organization of attack

The starting point for understanding the relationship between anarchists and the new social movements is to recognize that we are a minority within the movement. This is, of course, the normal position for anarchists, but it does call for a specific theoretical thinking and practice in order for us to effectively operate in such a context. Anarchists are hopefully at an insurrectional level of struggle, they are, for the most part, working towards insurrection, while the movement in general struggles at an intermediate level. What does this mean? Anarchists, except those who hold a determinist and evolutionary view of history, understand that insurrection, which destroys the transcendent institutions of state and capital and allows the realization social relations that are immanently organized, is always possible as an outcome of struggle. Thus anarchists should always be working towards the goal of insurrection.



The struggle of the new social movements that have developed over the 1990's, however, are mostly at an intermediate level, a level in which specific institutions may be attacked without a clear goal of insurrection against capital and the state. Direct action against the WTO, the IMF, and the World Bank, the movement to destroy genetically modified crops, the movement of the landless to directly appropriate the conditions of their existence, and the direct action environmental movement all contain the potential of moving towards insurrection. Anarchists must open and develop that potential. There are others within these social movements that, whether consciously or not, work to close the possibility of insurrection. This often happens as a result of certain forms of organization and organizing activity. Permanent organizations, organizations that attempt to synthesize the multitude of those struggling into a single, unified organization, and organizations that attempt to mediate struggle are all forms of organization that tend to close the potential of insurrection.

Before discussing the question of organization further, we need to clarify how we will use the terms 'the multitude' and 'the mass.' The multitude is what we will call all those who are excluded and exploited by capitalism; it is the multitude that struggles against the state and capitalism, it is the multitude that makes up the society against the state. The mass is the multitude as it has been synthesized into a singular block and disciplined to act in a unified manner. Just as a nation-state must transform a multitude of people into 'the People' or citizens in order to create a disciplined nation, and the church must morally discipline its members to produce a flock, organizations of synthesis, such as 'the Party,' must shape the multitude into a mass in order to control its movement. The nation-state, the church, and the Party are all transcendent institutions in relation to a multitude in that they all stand above and outside the multitude and yet attempt to organize its social relations. They swoop down upon the multitude with a grid of identity into which all must fit—all relationships are organized from the outside with such a grid.

For anarchists, the question of organization, however, is an ethical (immanent) instead of moral (transcendent) question: in a given situation, how do we combine in a way that promotes our active powers? How do we bring a multitude together in a way that doesn't limit our potential, our power to act, and our different desires?

In the wake of Seattle and Prague many organizers are discussing how to build and control the movement. They talk as if they are artists standing over a lump of clay—the multitude—that needs to be shaped, disciplined. The discussion usually leads to talk of the need to limit the actions of the most confrontational and to be better 'organized.' Concerning the Prague demonstrations, one "American organizer" stated, "If we are really serious about doing an action, then we need to make certain there are de-escalation teams, people who are responsible for breaking up the violence." The goal of the type of organization that they

promote, however, is to limit direct confrontational action and to encourage dialogue and mediation. Naively, they want to harness the power of a mass of bodies in order to get a seat at the table of power. For anarchists, of course, being against capitalism and the state in their entirety, there can be no dialogue with constituted power, with the transcendent institutions of the state and capital. The willingness of those transcendent institutions to initiate a dialogue may be a sign of their fear and weakness, but it is also the beginning of our defeat when we limit our active power to join them in discussion.

Our active power, our power to create and transform, is our only weapon, and that which limits such power from within the movement is our greatest weakness. This does not mean that we should remain unorganized; in fact, it poses the very question of organization: how do we combine in a way that promotes our active powers? The anarchist ethic is always a critical ethic, and thus it denounces everything that cuts us off from and diminishes our power to act.

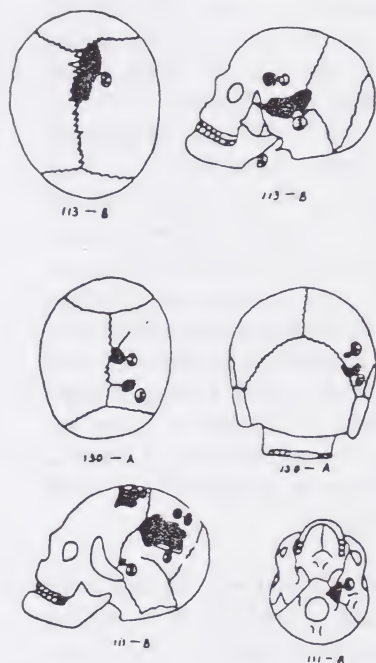
As noted above, one of the greatest dangers to the development of the new social movements in a positive direction is that forms of organization that cut us off from our active power and close off the potential of insurrection in the present moment become dominant: these are permanent, synthesizing, and mediating organizations.

Permanent organizations tend to develop into transcendent institutions in relation to the struggling multitude. They tend to develop a formal or informal hierarchy and to disempower the multitude: power is alienated from its active form within the multitude and instituted within the organization. This transforms the active multitude into a passive mass. The hierarchical constitution of power-relations removes decision from the moment—the immanence—of its necessity. The practical consequences of such an organization is that the active powers of those involved in the struggle are stifled by the organization. Decisions that should be made by those involved in an action are deferred to the organization; and, permanent organizations tend to make decisions based not on the necessity of a specific goal or action, but on the needs of that organization, especially its preservation. The organization becomes an end in itself.

As an organization moves towards permanence and comes to stand above the multitude, the organizer appears, often claiming to have created the struggle, and begins to speak for the mass. It is the job of the organizer to transform the multitude into a controllable mass and to represent that mass to the media. Organizers rarely views themselves as part of the multitude; they stand outside of it, transcendent to it, and talk of 'reaching out to the community,' 'awakening the masses,' and 'building the organization and movement' as if insurrection was a game of numbers. Thus, as outsiders, they don't see it as their task to act, to do actions, but to propagandize and organize, for it is the masses that act.

Their worst fear is alienating the 'real masses' thus image becomes all-important. After Seattle many organizers





**CIVILIZATION, ISLAND OF**, the most important of the **VITI ISLANDS** of Polynesia, claimed for France in 1831 by the captain of the *Calembredaine*, the first ship to sight it. The small island is wooded and mountainous, but thick mist often obscures the scenery.

The Island of Civilization is a monarchy ruled by a rosewood king. The king is mechanically operated and can sign up to thirty decrees at a sitting; his signature is beautifully written in English. The advantages of this system are numerous. It avoids all the problems posed by succession and changes of dynasty. It also means that the Civil List amounts to only fifty francs per annum in oil and grease. Only the President of the Council of Ministers is entitled to wind up the king.

Ministers have heavy responsibilities. Each has a slip-knot around his neck and any elector may pull the rope until the minister strangles if the latter is shown to have acted against his charter of appointment. All members of parliament are deaf and dumb, which puts an end to endless debates and significantly reduces the possibility of their being influenced by persuasive arguments. Debates are conducted in sign language.

Under the terms of a law adopted shortly after the arrival of the French, it is forbidden for more than one person to fight a duel. This has put an end to duelling as such.

were worried about the effect that property destruction would have on the image of the movement, and went to great lengths to distance themselves from the perpetrators of such acts. Direct Action Network went to the extreme of not offering legal aid to those charged with felonies during the Seattle protests. Seemingly, they subscribe to Napoleonic law in which the accused are presumed guilty, not innocent. Again, their image was at stake. Later, in L.A., the August collective asked D.A.N. if they could use its space for the L.A. anarchist conference. D.A.N. declined explaining that anarchists in general were too white and too male, and this would affect D.A.N.'s ability to reach out to the community. In other words, they wanted to appear to be in touch with the community, and anarchists would hurt their image.

For the organizer, who takes as his/her motto 'only that which appears in the media exists,' concrete action always takes a back seat to the maintenance of media image. The goal of such image maintenance is never to attack a specific transcendent institution, but to affect public opinion, forever build the movement or, even worse, the organization. The organizer must always worry about how the actions of others will reflect on the movement; they must, therefore, both attempt to discipline the struggling multitude and try to control how the movement is represented in the media. Image replaces action for the permanent organization and the organizer who operates within the society of the spectacle.

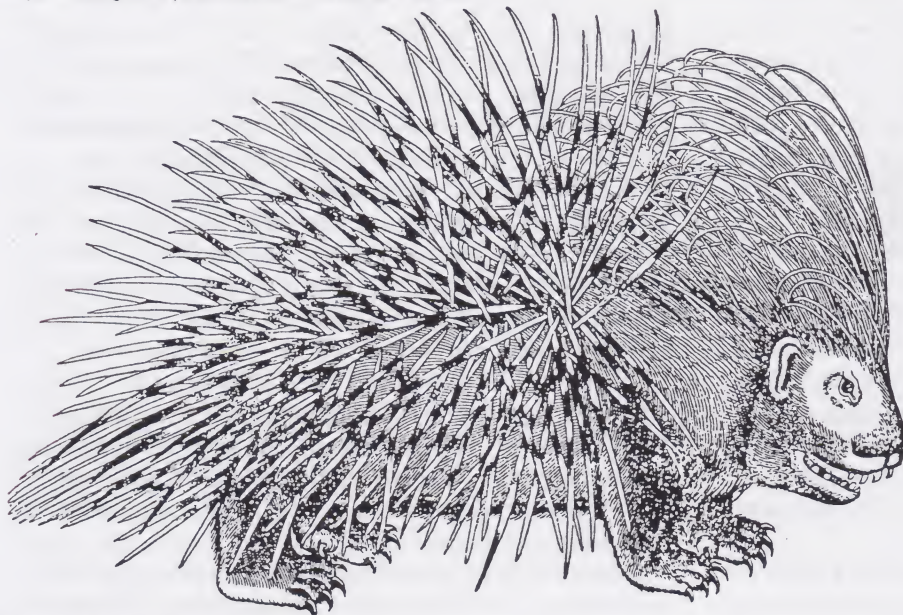
The attempt to control the vast image and opinion-making factories of our society is a losing battle, as if we could ever try to match the quantity of images put forward by the media or get them to 'tell the truth.' To come to a better understanding of the problems involved in such a battle and how the 'organizer' operates, we need to first better comprehend how 'opinion' functions in society. On a basic level, we need to ask, what is opinion? An opinion is not something first found among the public in general and then, afterwards, replayed through the media, as a simple reporting of the public opinion. An opinion exists in the media first; it is produced by the media not the multitude. Secondly, the media then reproduces the opinion a million times over linking the opinion up to a certain type of person (conservatives think x, liberals think y). Thirdly, as Alfredo Bonanno points out, "[An opinion] is a flattened idea, an idea that has been uniformed in order to make it acceptable to the largest number of people. Opinions are massified ideas." Public opinion is produced as a series of simple choices or solutions ('I'm for globalization and free trade,' or 'I'm for more national control and protectionism'). We are all supposed to choose—as we choose our leaders or our burgers—instead of think for ourselves. It is obvious, therefore, that anarchists cannot use the opinion-making factory to create counter-opinions, and hopefully anarchists would never want to operate on the level of opinion even if we could somehow exert control over the content spewed out of the factory gates. Anyhow, the anarchist ethic could never be communicated in the form of opinion, it would die once massified. However, it is exactly on the level of opinion that the organizer works, for opinion and image-maintenance are the very tools of power, tools used to shape and discipline a multitude into a controllable mass.

'The Party' is a permanent organization that attempts to synthesize all struggle into one controllable organization; in doing so, it cuts the multitude off from its active power and closes the door to insurrection. For the Party, the struggle is always in the future, at some mythical time; the present is for political work, for recruiting and disciplining party members. Commenting on Prague, the Communist Party of Great Britain noted that the most positive event in the latest Global Day of Action wasn't the action, but the fact that they sold or distributed 2,100 issues of the *Weekly Worker* and passed out 5,000 leaflets (what they call political work). Meanwhile the International Socialist Organization (the SWP) concentrated on image at the expense of action: they claimed they would bring 2500 people but brought less than 1000 and switched from an agreed upon position within the structure of the direct action damaging its success. But, of course, the ISO had other priorities than the action itself; they were present in order to recruit new members for the future, a future that their actions ensure will never come. As such, their decision wasn't adequate to the necessity of the moment; decision had been removed from the immanence within a multitude and brought into a transcendent institution. The ISO left a key intersection open and a few hundred anarchists, who could make decisions within the moment itself, covered the intersection as best they



could. Transcendent organizations, such as permanent organizations and mediating organizations, by their very logic, will always forgo action and close the potential for insurrection. But transcendent organizations, such as 'the Party,' while they can stifle action, can never contain the desires and power of the multitude; they are always doomed to failure.

But, as anarchists, who refuse such a vanguard, transcendent position, we are part of the multitude, we are within it, we are immanent to it. We are exploited as the multitude is; we are excluded as the multitude is. While on the one hand the anarchist ethic is always a critical ethic that denounces transcendent institutions and morality, it is also always a constructive ethic that leads towards the building of new social relations and new forms of active power. As a minority within the struggling multitude, we choose a form of organization that follows both the logic of our position within the movement of the exploited and the anarchist ethic of immanently organized social relations—relations that are self-organized instead of organized by a transcendent institution (such as the state, the church, or the party) which stands outside the multitude. We must organize ourselves in a manner that won't tend towards permanence and hierarchy, which won't come to stand above the multitude, and chooses self-activity over image and representation. We must develop forms of organization that open to the potential for insurrection and move the struggle in that direction, instead of always shifting that potential further into the future.



### Informal organization

What type of organization allows decision to occur in the moment of its necessity? We call organization that lacks the formality and authority which separate organizers and organized, informal organization. In this section, we are specifically discussing the organization of social struggle. We will discuss some general principles that have grown out of practice. Just as some small-scale societies lack formal impersonal institutions, informal organization lacks offices and hierarchical positions. Because the organizer's nature is to plan and control s/he often privileges the perpetuation of the organization over other goals. Informal organizations dissolve when their goal is achieved or abandoned, they do not perpetuate themselves merely for the sake of the organization if the goals that caused people to organize have ceased to exist. The passage from informal to formal or permanent organization is analogous to the moment when a small-scale society creates impersonal institutions; it is a moment in which the group's power is alienated and placed outside of it.

Informal organization is a means for affinity groups to coordinate efforts when necessary. We must always remember that many things can be done easier with an affinity group or individual, in these cases higher levels of organization just makes the decision making process cumbersome, it stifles us. *The smallest amount of organization necessary to*

The island is rich and prosperous. The old railway system has been replaced by a transport system using electric fluid. The locomotive, made of metal and known as a "horse-pistol" because of its shape, is attached by an iron ring to a glass carriage in which the passenger sits. The carriage travels at incredible speeds along a thin, metal strip which serves as a conductor. The friction gives off sparks which at night light up a wide area on either side of the track. The system is cheap, easily installed and can be removed if local residents object to it. Unfortunately only one passenger can travel at a time; more than one person in the carriage would greatly increase the risk of electrocution. The system is also used by the postal service. The mail is so quick that one often receives a reply to a letter before it is delivered.

Gas lighting has been replaced by a portable apparatus using *phosphoriculine*, a subtle and inflammable substance discovered by Cucu-Mani-Chou. A long tube is attached to the rectum and genitals. *Phosphoriculine* is extracted from the excreta and flows into a lamp carried on a belt at waist-level. The quality of the light varies in accordance with the user's diet—onions, peas, lentils and turnips produce a particularly clear light. Temperament also has an effect on the quality and colour of the light: a lymphatic temperament will produce white light, whereas a nervous temperament will produce a blue light. Bilious and sanguine people give off yellow and red lights respectively.

*Phosphoriculine* is also used medically, for the diagnosis, for example, of gastro-enteritis and colic. Doctors usually treat their patients with nothing, as they believe all medicine to be harmful. Dysentery is cured by making the patient put his head to the ground and press it with his hands—a treatment which has never failed to work.

(Henry-Florent Delmotte, *Voyage pittoresque et industriel dans le Paraguay-Roux et la Palingénésie Australe par Tridacé-Nafé-Théobrome de Kaou't'Chouk, Gentilhomme Breton, sous-aide à l'établissement des clyso-pompes, etc.*, Meschacébé [i.e. Mons], 1835)





achieve ones aims is always the best to maximize our active powers.

Informal organization must be based on an ethic of autonomous action; autonomy is necessary to prevent our active powers from becoming alienated, to prevent the formation of relations of authority. Autonomy is refusing to obey or give orders, which are always shouted from above or beyond the situation. Autonomy allows decision to occur in and during the situation of its necessity, instead of being predetermined or delayed by the decision of a committee or meeting. Organizational platforms impose a formality in the decision making process that inhibits autonomy. This does not mean to say however that we shouldn't think strategically about the future and make agreements or plans. On the contrary, plans and agreements are useful and important. What we are emphasizing is a flexibility that allows people to discard plans when they become useless. Plans should be adaptable to events as they unfold. It can be dangerous during a demonstration or action to hesitate to change plans when events take an unexpected turn, because one's group had originally planned otherwise. Since autonomy is born out of an ethic that rejects the blocking of active powers, it therefore implies a refusal to block the actions of others with an important exception. When others try to impede our action, we will not just sit by and let them. Examples of this include, those who tried to physically stop protestors from breaking windows in Seattle, those who take photos of illegal actions, those who unmask people who choose to be masked for security reasons, and those who mark protestors with paint to be identified later by the police. These people not only refuse to respect the autonomy of others' action, but take this to an extreme by trying to place those they disagree with in the hands of the police, enemies who have the power to take away years of our lives. We have no choice but to defend ourselves. The point where autonomy ends is the point where alienated power is formed, where our only weapon, our power to act is taken from us.

Just as an informal organization must have an ethic of autonomy or it will be transformed into an authoritarian organization, in order to avoid the alienation of our active powers, it must also have an ethic of no compromise with respect the organization's agreed goal. The organization's goal should be either achieved or abandoned. Compromising with those who we oppose (e.g.; such as the State or a corporation) defeats all true opposition, it replaces our power to act with that of our enemies. Since Seattle, global financial and trade organizations have been calling for dialogue. To get us to bargain with them they have tried to look sympathetic and concerned. During the protests in Prague in September, a World Bank representative said: "We sympathize with the questions the protestors are proposing but we disagree with their methods. We think they're going about this in the wrong way. We want dialogue not force." Another World Bank representative said: "These are important meetings, about ending AIDS and poverty; what we want is dialogue not diatribes." The fact that the World Bank wants dialogue is a measure of our success in the streets. They hope we will choose

dialogue over direct action, because they know that dialogue with them would be ineffective, that they would never really concede to our demands. They can listen to us, politely respond, even make minor adjustments, but they all eventually go home to a gated community of oblivion and have a martini. This is why they want to channel the force of our direct action into appeals, petitions and attempts to manipulate the mainstream media. The World Bank recognizes the power of our direct action and is taking counter measures; it is trying to convince us to use ineffective methods.

The scraps handed down to appease and divert us by those we oppose must be refused. Compromise with any transcendent institution (the State, WTO, WB, IMF, the Party etc.) is always the alienation of our power to the very institutions we supposedly wish to destroy; this sort of compromise results in the forfeiture of our power to act decisively, to make decisions and actions in the time we choose. As such, compromise only makes the state and capital stronger.

For those who wish to open the possibility of insurrection, those who don't wish to wait for the supposedly appropriate material conditions for revolution, for those who don't want a revolution which is merely the creation of a new power structure but want the destruction of all structures which alienate out power from us, such compromise is contrary to their aims. To continually refuse to compromise is to be in perpetual conflict with the established order and its structures of domination and deprivation. Permanent conflictuality means that we will not wait for orders from leaders or organizers who, by nature of their role, aim to control our rebellion and thus alienate our active powers. Permanent conflictuality is uncontrollable autonomous action.

Informal organizations may be composed of affinity groups with quite different political perspectives from each other. The disparate perspectives that may be found in an informal organization would not tend to be found within the affinity group. The affinity group would be based on a commonality of perspective that wouldn't necessarily exist in a larger group. Some people wish to open the possibility for insurrection, while others are only concerned with an immediate goal. There is no reason why those who share an immediate practical aim but diverge in their long-term goals might not come together. For example, an anti-genetic engineering group could form and decide to coordinate the tearing up test crops if there are many plots in an area and to circulate anti-GE leaflets. (In cases of sabotage, the fewer the people who know the better, information should only be shared between affinity groups when there is a reason to coordinate efforts, for example, when it is desirable for several affinity groups to hit several targets in one night.) In this case those who want an insurrectionary rupture with this social order and those who merely hate genetic engineering could easily work together towards this immediate goal. For those who wish to open the possibility of insurrection, such cooperation will not close the door on their dreams. Informal organization, with its ethics of autonomy and no compromise, does not control struggle; and, uncontrollability opens the possibility for an insurrectionary rupture with this necrophilic social order.



In the above case, we're assuming that all involved uphold an anti-authoritarian ethic that respects autonomy of action. Because authority can arise in any group, some anarchists feel safer if they only interact with other anarchists, thus avoiding authoritarians. But it is not the label anarchist that annihilates authority but an ongoing struggle with all those one interacts with. Every new situation and relation we enter poses the possibility for the rise of authority. Just as Clastres noted a 'Society against the State' other anthropologists who have lived in small-scale societies have noted a process of assertive egalitarianism, an active tendency to squelch attempts at creating roles of authority, or economic inequality. In an informal organization, we need to assertively counter the formation of authoritarian relations. The difficulty of this problem cannot be avoided by staying in an anarchist ghetto.

Anarchists could be a force that helps the anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian currents within the anti-globalization movement spread further. This could be achieved by opening up discussion between anarchists and other anti-capitalist groups, and between anti-capitalists and anti-corporate/anti-globalization groups. This discussion would in some cases lead to links of cooperation and solidarity. When we discuss the importance of links between struggles or the spread of struggle we are not talking about a growth in numbers of an organization or movement. The type of organization that we have been discussing is not composed of people who aim to increase its numbers at the sacrifice of the quality of the relationships of those who come together; the spark of rebellion cannot be quantified. Informal organization is a means for discussion between diverse individuals and groups to become focused action. Informal organizations, affinity groups and individuals have already given birth to many projects, some of which aim to increase communication and sharing such as gatherings, the creation of social spaces like info-shops, and publications, these projects are crucial when capitalism constantly puts up walls to separate us. Others have focused on the urgent task of directly attacking the existent social order.

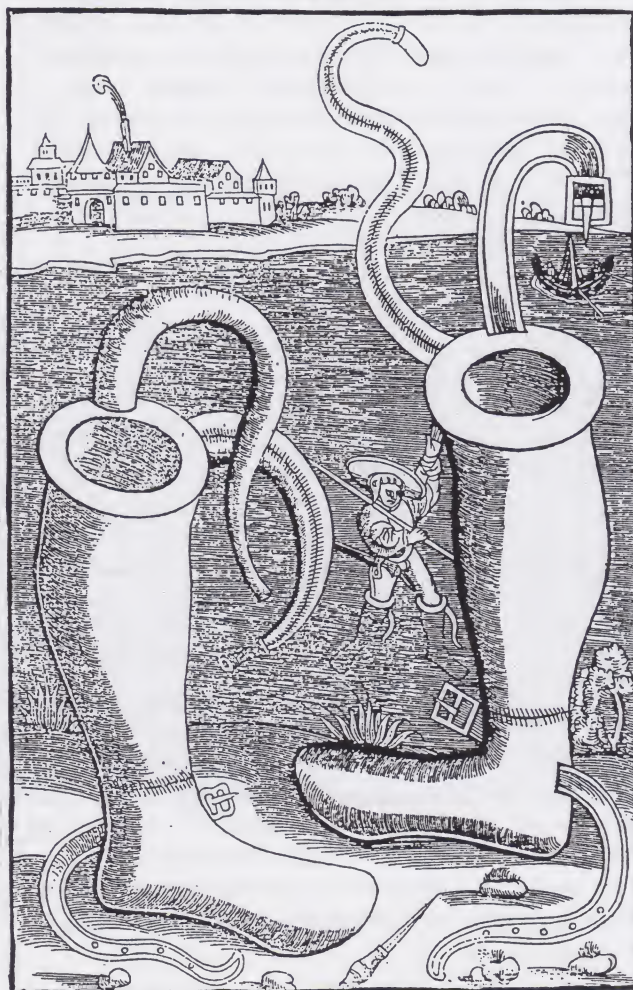
### **'Make our struggle as transnational as capital.'**

This slogan is very compelling and has become the most common slogan heard within the anti-globalization movement. But how do we make our struggle as transnational as capital? This brings up some difficult problems for anti-authoritarians. How can a transnational struggle against capital and the state occur without creating an overarching massive authoritarian structure? How can struggle against a common enemy, capital, remain focused yet disparate, local and global? Transnational struggle, in reality, means struggle on many scalar levels. It also demands the development of many practices that allow us to work together and, at the same time, ward off the growth of transcendent institutions in our midst. Operating on many scalar levels will create tensions within the movement, and there is no simple solution that resolves such tensions. Yet, attempting to operate on a single scalar level, such as the national scale or the building of a massive international

organization, dooms our movement to failure; nor can we build a local cocoon to hibernate in. Waiting only brings us defeat.

Capitalism is a very adaptable force; it has managed to embed itself in innumerable social and cultural realities. Capitalism operates from above and below; it imposes itself through the coercion of deprivation and then embeds itself in social relations. There is one capitalism, it operates as a system, yet it functions in millions of particular local ways. Any fight against it must destroy both the transcendent institutions that impose it from above (the state, companies, etc.) and transform the relations that sustain it from below. If the structures of domination and deprivation which uphold capitalism, and the capitalist social relations that have penetrated nearly every facet of our daily lives are to be destroyed, this destruction must spring from the desire of the multitude. The desire to destroy capitalism is the spark which must arise in many localities and spread throughout the globe, in order for our struggle to become as transnational as capital.

There is no longer anywhere to hide. If we destroy the state and capital in one place, leaving the industrial military regime in the hands of our enemies, our little utopia will soon be crushed. Likewise if we try to isolate ourselves, as Hakim Bey so poetically suggests in T.A.Z., to create a self-sufficient autonomous zone free from capital, we cannot succeed. It is of





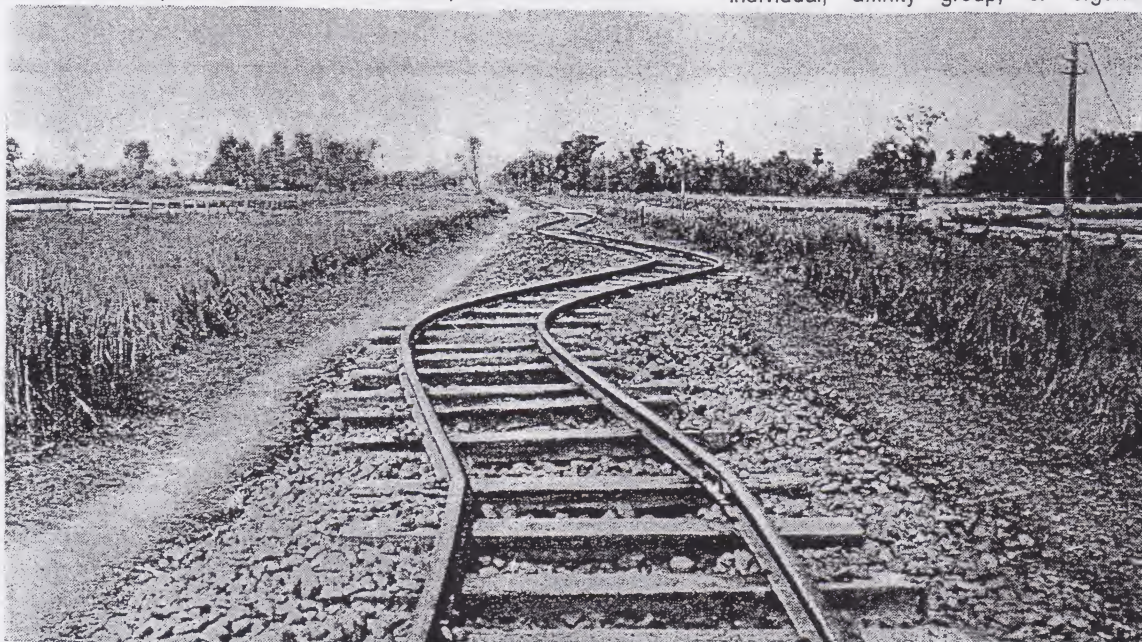
course very important to create spaces for ourselves where we can breathe freely; where we can act and think without the immediate strait jacket of capitalist relations and roles, without the 9-5 production-consumption grind. But if we stop there we run into a problem, capitalism surrounds us. The squat is evicted, the self-sufficient rural community is surrounded by towns, or logging moves in until the only trees left are on ones land. One can no longer be completely outside of capitalism; it is a social disease that has touched all societies. This is not to say that it has fully penetrated them all, the few Penan of Borneo that remain in the forest do still share a social life that is in stark contrast to capitalist relations. But they are fighting for their lives and there is not much forest left. We must understand that just as a genetically modified test crop will spread into nearby fields, capitalism is a pest which seeks to take over everything it touches; it cannot be contained without being destroyed as a whole.

Many anarchists in the anti-globalization movement operate on the scale of the nation-state, imagining that Clastres' "Society Against the State" could be rearticulated as the "State Against Capital"; they seem to understand capital as becoming pure and separating itself from the state. And as an index of current pessimism the state is imagined as protecting culture against global capitalism. As we argued in our section on value, however, there can be no capitalism without transcendent institutions, such as the state, to back up its private property system. The state, in some form, is the condition of possibility of capitalism, that which is necessary for capitalism to go on existing. Thus capitalism can never free itself from the state and continue to reproduce itself. Of course, the transcendent

that we need to compromise and even ally ourselves with older transcendent institutions such as the nation-state are sorely misguided. Any compromise with alienated power can only cut us off from our power to transform society and our power to create the life of our desires to the best of our abilities. Thinking about the issue of the scale of resistance, about how to bring the concept of a transnational resistance to and attack on capital into practice, demands a much more careful analysis.

1. When people start thinking on global terms there is sometimes a tendency to assume that the only way for a struggle to be global is to function like a state or corporation, to try to synthesize all struggle within one international organization, and thus unify practice through this organization. This is undesirable from an anti-authoritarian point of view, yet it is also impractical. How could one possibly bring all struggle under one organization, without first suppressing many local struggles. A large organization of this sort by nature separates decision from the needs of the exploited, it makes them wait to act until the moment which is most advantageous to the organization. Large organizations that bring together many social struggles often think only in abstract terms about capital. It thus becomes necessary to wait to act until the appropriate material conditions arise, for a crisis to arise in capitalism as a whole. Such thinking is blind to the multifarious local motivations for revolt.

Transcendent organizations can only command revolt; in doing so they try to deprive revolt of its impetus, the immanent desire of the multitude. It is this desire that is the spark of insurrection; only it can transform the whole of social life. No individual, affinity group, or organization can command



institutions that allow for the reproduction of capitalism are constantly transforming themselves; they are not static.

As the scale of the state-capital relation changes so too must the organization of resistance and attack; yet, any argument

insurrection; insurrection is by nature uncontrollable. Those who dream of an insurrection cannot just will it into existence, they can only open up the possibility for its unfolding through direct attacks on this social order, actions which can communicate and spread throughout the social body.

2. Capital can never be attacked

in the abstract, it can only be attacked in its concrete manifestations; attack is always local but it can communicate globally. Local attacks can inspire people elsewhere—who have a common enemy—to take action. The points at which people



perceive the commonality of an enemy vary widely, from a specific company, specific law or politician, to capitalism or the state as a whole. Actions and the publicizing of actions via communiqués and our media are opportunities for people to see the commonality between the oppressed in a faraway place and themselves. In this lies an opportunity for people to take their analysis one step further, and become critical of capitalism as a totality.

Recently in North America, environmentalists have been more successful than workers in letting local struggle communicate the global scale of capital. The environmental direct action movement is spreading quickly all over the continent, with very little organization at all. The ELF is not an organization, anyone can sign the name ELF (though those who started it request that those who sign the name meet certain criteria of perspective and goal). Yet, ELF actions have spread widely without the support of an organization, ELF actions occur because people are angry that the earth is being trashed, this ire spreads more effectively than would a permanent organization with its committees and paper selling. Not all people who engage in such acts of sabotage use the name ELF, there are innumerable other examples, the tearing up of genetically engineered test crops which has spread over several continents is the most well known example. In these cases, the local act of sabotage communicates a global enemy the capitalist industrial machine that is polluting our planet.

3. The recent upsurge of the global days of action offers an opportunity for specific actions to communicate and build links globally. But we need to ask what exactly is the nature of the opportunity that the global days of action offer anarchists? While the targets chosen, the international institutions of capitalism, do help to communicate an opposition to capitalism in general, perhaps the greatest opportunity these global days of action offer is the potential to link-up particular, local actions that attack specific targets with a general opposition to capitalism. In other words, the fact of the simultaneity of actions on a particular date may be more important than the spectacular shutting down of a huge meeting. By skipping the big event and instead doing smaller, local actions, anarchists can communicate the local consequences of the ever expanding capitalist death-machine. By the very simultaneity of many actions connections between regions and struggles are built. We are not saying that our actions should be determined by the dates set by the institutions of global capitalism nor should one only conduct actions on such dates, but we also should not ignore the historical opportunities offered by the growth of the global days of action. To be effective such actions should be part of an ongoing struggle. Doing actions locally also has the potential to involve others who may not understand how the big events of the global days of action—the attacks on institutions such as the WTO, the WB, and the IMF—are connected to their lives. Doing local actions on the dates of the global days of action is one important way to intensify such struggles.

4. The final--and possibly most important--key to an active, transnational attack on capital and the state is developing

the practice of a critical and revolutionary solidarity. When we are critical of those who share our aims, critical solidarity is a way for disagreements over strategy, tactics and organization to be aired and discussed without trying to block each other's actions. If we continually block the actions of others no action will take place. Notably, since Seattle previously fierce theoretical divisions have taken on less importance. This was particularly clear in the call for a Revolutionary Anti-Capitalist Block at the A16 Washington protest, which was a significant call for solidarity and joint action by all who consider themselves to be anti-capitalist revolutionaries. There has been a lot more activity on many levels since Seattle, people who didn't go have been inspired by the stories of those who did, suddenly now that there is plenty to do, theoretical divisions give way to concerns of practical importance. As a minority within the movement of the exploited, anarchists must find ways to work and interact with those with whom they disagree. At the same time this doesn't mean that disagreements are hidden. It is important that the concept of critical solidarity be understood widely, for all too often a critical attitude is taken to mean a lack of support. We can be critical of the Zapatistas while we act in solidarity with the struggle of the excluded in Chiapas against the Mexican State and the imposition of neo-liberal economics. It is always more important to act in solidarity with people's decision to create their own lives, than to agree with their theoretical perspective or the tactics they choose. It is the solidarity with the becoming-active and the refusal of the alienation of power that is most vital. As Nikos Mazotis said at his trial, "For me, solidarity means the unreserved acceptance and support with every means of the right that the people must have to determine their lives as they wish, not letting others decide in their place, like the State and Capital do."

Along with a critical solidarity that is always open to the autonomous action of others, we need to build revolutionary solidarity. Revolutionary solidarity should be active and in conflict with the structures of domination. Revolutionary solidarity allows us to move far beyond the "send-a-check" style of solidarity that so pervades the left as well as solidarity that relies on petitioning the state for relief or mercy. One example of revolutionary solidarity was Nikos Mazotis' action against TVX Gold in December 1997. Many people in the villages around Strymonikos in Northern Greece were struggling against the installation of a gold metallurgy plant in their area. In solidarity with the villagers, Nikos placed a bomb in the Ministry of Industry of Development that was intended to explode when no one was in the building; unfortunately, it never went off at all. Nikos is now serving a 15-year prison sentence (reduced to five and a half years; he is due out this year). TVX Gold is a multinational company whose headquarters is in Canada, there are thus many points at which revolutionary solidarity with the villagers of Strymonikos could have been enacted. Fundraising on behalf of one's comrades is necessary and surely appreciated, but this could be combined with more active forms of solidarity with those who struggle against our common enemies. Revolutionary solidarity communicates the link between the exploitation and repression of others and our own fate; and, it shows people the



points at which capitalism or the state operate in similar ways in very different places. By creating links between the struggles against the transcendent power structures that form the State and Capital, revolutionary solidarity has the potential to take our local struggles to a global level. Solidarity is when you recognize your own struggle in the struggle of others. Revolutionary solidarity is solidarity with the becoming-active of others and therefore with their refusal to accept the alienation of their own power. Moreover, revolutionary solidarity is always an active attack; it always involves the recovery of our own active powers that multiply in combination—in solidarity—with the active powers of others.

#### Conclusion

In this article we have argued that anarchism is a practice that is always in tension with the constituted order. The common thread of anarchist practice is the refusal of a *transcendent, constituted order*, the demand that decisions be made by those involved in a situation. Anarchism is an attack on all that separates us from our active powers; anarchism is the desire that animates our refusal to allow the alienation of our power. Thus the practice of anarchism is an ethic. The practices that we have sketched in the above essay have been developed by anarchists within the struggle of the excluded, and, as such, they constitute a continuation of the society against the state.

In order to remain vital, however, anarchism must avoid the constitution of transcendent power-relations within its midst. For such relations would both void the effectiveness of our attack and lead to the defeat of self-constituted social relations. Informal organization is a means for anarchists to combine with others of the exploited multitude without forming transcendent institutions. The practice of the anarchist ethic within the wider struggle will both allow people to remain active in their attack and bring into existence new, immanently created ways of living and relating. Through the very practice of informal organization, the anarchist ethic can spread further within the anti-globalization movement. Within the wider movement of the exploited and excluded, the movement—however coherent—to reclaim the power to create our own social relations beyond measure, anarchists are thus in a position to deepen the struggle against capital and the state.

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## THE FEROCIOUS JAWS OF HABIT: Enigma, Knowledge and Revolt by Mare Almani

*"And when the foam of the arrogant waves flows back sighing, the lustrous pearls of life lie on the sand."*

—Giorgio Colli, *La Ragione Errabonda* (The Wandering Reason)

I see Empedocles walking away from Agrigento. Saluting the inhabitants with his unmistakable wave, he sets out toward the summit of Etna. With the nimbleness of thought his feet move swiftly, almost to the top. Now the volcano captures his thought...I mean his senses. It seems to him that earth has never vibrated with so much force, as if all the mysteries were no longer hidden in the abysses, but were on the surface among the minerals and the crevices. The air becomes increasingly tense like the strings of a lyre, nearly taking the breath away from anyone who can climb no further, but only return to his paths and his habits. In the distance, Empedocles sees the sea, the night is accomplice. There will be no return. Now the fire of the crater is making him dizzy.

This is the one who described the four elements of the cosmos in his great poem: earth, air fire and water. He had written that the life of every being depends upon their mixing and separating. Love unites them and Hatred divides them in an endless harmony. Empedocles did not achieve his wisdom through the academy, but by dancing as prey to divine madness, moved by the arrogant force of a communism of the spirit. But on this night, he is alone and there is no longer time for celebrations. Everything becomes simple, the earth throbs, the wind blows, the sea bides its time, the fire calls. He has seen the enigma of the cosmos, which the gods left as a challenge to the intelligence. Tonight he has nothing to add to his life. He will reach out to drink fire from the eternal craters in first flight.

I see Homer seated on the rocks of an island, facing the sea of Io. He is a tired man, the wisest of the Greeks, lover of rest after many battles in the arena of the intellect and of words. Almost absent-mindedly, he asks a group of fishermen coming from the sea if they caught anything. "What we caught, we left; we carry what we did not catch", they answer him. With this riddle, they refer to the fleas, some of which they found and crushed and some of which they carry in their clothes. The content of the statement is empty, but the formulation is that of the classic enigma. And the enigma is a challenge, an encounter at daggers drawn between the intellect and that which is hidden. Homer's passion for knowledge is enflamed again, the attack allows no escape, the wise one must solve the enigma. The wager is understanding, the risk is life. Homer does not know how to solve the enigma, does not hold the square and dies "from discouragement."



Alluding to the Sphinx which is its symbol, a fragment from Pindar speaks of the enigma that "resounds from the ferocious jaws of the virgin." Therefore, the challenge that can hide itself even in a riddle that resounds from the jaws of a fisherman is ferocious. The Sphinx, which is the figure that precisely represents the common background of human and animal life, will address its enigma to all the inhabitants of Thebes. The wager in play is peace against a terrible miasma, a famine that kills old and young. The challenge of the monster, like that of the fishermen, is trifling as a riddle. ("What creature goes first on four legs, then on two and, finally, on three?") No one is able to solve it, and the city counts its corpses. A vagabond named Oedipus will answer "Man" (first, an infant who cannot walk, then an adult and finally an old man who needs a cane). The sharp word causes the sphinx to sink into the abyss.

I see Heracleitus the obscure, alone in his forest. he spoke only to the children among the inhabitants of Ephesus. I watch him feed on roots and berries until swollen with water, just one step from death. Having gone through the *pathos of the hidden*, he knows that speech is a weapon of Apollo the oblique, the god who strikes from a distance. He never says it nor hides it, but nods. Thus, he asks the doctor to whom he turns to stop the dropsy (the wise lover of fire—symbol of the infinite possible—is consumed by water) if with his knowledge he is able to nurture a fire in this place where there is a flood. The doctor who does not enjoy solving enigmas is astonished and powerless, and Heracleitus the obscure returns to the forest where one alone is like ten thousand. He buries himself under dung in an attempt to dry his own body out, counting on the force of the sun which is new every day. He had written that it is most necessary to extinguish the arrogance (the *hubris*) from the fire. But he does not renounce the fire, the arrogance of that which is hidden inside of us. Vanquished by water, he is torn apart by dogs.

I see Diogenes the Cynic, wandering and renegade, walking on that roadway that leads anyone who is sent into exile to become a bandit. A question of words of course, seeing that their interpretation can change life. With Diogenes, the sovereign detachment of the wise one is transformed into the histrionic gesture and the publicized style of provocation. Empedocles and Heracleitus are already distant, but their fire is not completely extinguished. Having gone to Delphi to consult the oracle, Diogenes did not succeed in solving the enigma. The oracle had told of the necessity of overturning the political institutions of his city, but he had interpreted this as minting false coins. But ethics, or rather being in agreement with oneself, which is to say with the enigmas of one's demons, is not an inconsequential hobby. Now Diogenes is in exile, and there is no place for an honest counterfeiter among those who respect money at least as much as they respect authority.

I see Socrates on his deathbed. He no longer has the pedantry that distinguished him in the plaza at Athens, in the guise of the moralist of the state who uses his own

courage to as a defense of the Law. A greater Sophist than the others, if he did not love the haughtiness of the powerful, he loved the individual who would place her own ethic above collective morality and authority even less. Rightly, some have seen the first specter of the baleful shadow of christianity in him. Socrates carries the signs of the community of contestation and of the challenge in decline, as well as those of the fulltime intellectual, the dialectical peacemaker, the professor of philosophy within himself. With him, the reason that is born from play and ecstasy wrongly begins to renounce its own ferocity with the sole aim of institutionalizing its power. And yet, Socrates never wrote, convinced that truth is inseparable from the one who states it and from the moment in which it is stated, that it is not a logical or juridical principle.

I see something allusive turn about him, something theatrical and deep. To anyone who awaits some clear precept, his jaw leaves only one phrase, an enigma on which understanding continues to stumble: "We owe a rooster to Asclepius."

The god hurls deceptive words; he is cruel; he wants to subdue intelligence. His intent is to cause death with banal and solemn formulas in the name of his own power. Human intelligence doesn't immediately grasp it, convinced, for fear of seeming overly simple, that the solution of an enigma could never be within reach. The god laughs.

What is an ideology at bottom if not a fixed game of enigmas? To say that the boss exists to maintain the workers (and not the reverse), is this not a mystery that would make a child smile? Calling war a humanitarian operation, is this not a riddle unworthy of the fishermen who tricked Homer? State propaganda is a refrain that perpetually repeats: "What is it that owns nothing, but can grant everything?" Even the teeth with which it bites us, this biter by the name of "state", are ours. Yet it seems omnipotent; its deadly riddle deceives. Its concessions are our "rights", it tells us, the rest is prohibited, criminal, terrorist.

Television and newspapers—those ferocious jaws of power—tell us over and over that the rich and poor form a "nation" with common interests, that money produces social wealth, that freedom is the child of law, that the police defend the collective well being, that anyone who steals is at fault, etc. Mediocre enigmas, the aim of which is not to challenge the intelligence, but to put it to sleep; the banality of these enigmas serves to hide the wager in play: death. In fact, just as in ancient Greece, anyone who doesn't know how to uncover the illusion—anyone who doesn't know how to escape from the ideology—dies. Every day the world is planted with corpses because of Exchange, the contamination of food, war, work, nuclear experiments, everyday banking operations and so on. And yet is all this justified with these enigmas? Pure and simple reversals of reality, boorish lies, tattered sophisms and flashy mystifications. The majority of our contemporaries repeat them without conviction. Men, women and children die, but



intelligence is not gripped by distress nor allowed to be overcome by discouragement. The Sphinx of money and law laughs.

The reason is that the daily constrictions, the obligations of survival, the forced displacements, the misery of relationships are the terrain where the stupid and ferocious riddles of power take hold. The banality of gestures and habits, this treacherous enemy of amazement and thought, renders one inept for the contestation in which intelligence forges its arms, the unending dialogue in which ideas become dangerous. This is the terrible coherence of the society in which we live: programmed and subjugated activity produces the opinions adapted to accepting it, lived misery elaborates its own conception. Besides, doesn't the blackmail of ideology—which is to say the justification of this reality—perhaps present itself as opinions? And it is well known that everyone has his opinion: so the concrete activity of individuals thinks to abolish differences of fashion in it.

The sudden entry of the unknown into daily life shakes up the reign of enigmas. This is shown by all the cases of men and women who “go out of their heads”, as they say, in other words, who are no longer able to bring their social identity and the perception they have of themselves into agreement. But it is demonstrated still more clearly by what occurs in the course of revolts, of riots, of insurrections. Why do men and women who had supported the police up until the night before find themselves attacking them? Why does the economic need of demanding more money turn into the anti-economic desire to burn down the banks? Why does the petty hatred toward criminals transform itself into assaults on prisons and solidarity in revolt? To sum it up, why are the enigmas of money and authority solved?

Because, in the course of these social tempests, individuals become *more intelligent*. Because the tricks of power become banal when men and women cease to be so. Because insurgents, in the community of unique ones, change their own lives and hence their understanding of the world. Because amazement, which is the source of all authentic thought, stands out above habit. Because social relationships—which the enigma reveals and hides at the same time—become more direct, burning down the foundation of the “dialectic of negotiation” and of ideology: from one side or the other of the barricades. Because the challenge of the enigma, the ferocity of its attack on the intelligence, the extreme competition of knowledge, finds men and women ready to welcome it rather than merely submit to it, aware now of the wager in play: freedom or death. Because at last the Nietzschean metamorphosis of the lion into the child, of sheltered self-defense into the opening to the game and to the marvelous completes itself.

That these moments of suspension of habit—and thus, of norms—are often only excesses of fever of an organism that then returns to the normal temperature (the zero degrees of survival), only serves to confirm the enigmatic relationship that exists between intelligence and revolt. The arrogant

wave of the latter leaves its pearls on the shore for the former, then it retreats. But where?

For the Greeks, the dialectic was the art of solving enigmas. Mortal battle of reason, contest between humans and gods, mad and impassioned game, arrogance of thought: the dialectic—which precedes the birth of philosophy—is the intellectual expression of the enigma. It is mental and physical confrontation at the same time, knowledge for living. It has nothing, then to do with the hegelian or marxist dialectic. It is not a question of an objective mechanism of History, nor of a device of conciliatory reason. In this sense, when Engels said that the proletariat had to realize modern German philosophy, that is to become dialecticians, he jumbled the papers. The dialectic of the exploited is only the practical intelligence that dissolves the illusions of ideology, first of these illusions being that of waiting on the shore of the tranquil and inexhaustible river of Progress. That tomorrow will be better than today is a perfidious illusion of the god, the monstrous sneer of the Sphinx.

Someone correctly interpreted the bombing of the plaza Fontana as an enigma thrown at proletarians. The overturning of reality was flagrant and ordinary but the immediate result was death. The state accused anarchists of having done that which only the state and its servants could and can do. The aim was clear: to bring social subversion to defeat. An enigma. The clash was unequal like that between a god and a human: official propaganda had all the newspapers and television as its own, the revolution had leaflets and the streets. And yet dialectical intelligence (in the ancient Greek sense, and not the hegelian as some would claim) didn't fail. The challenge was accepted with all arms. A decade of social war demonstrates it.

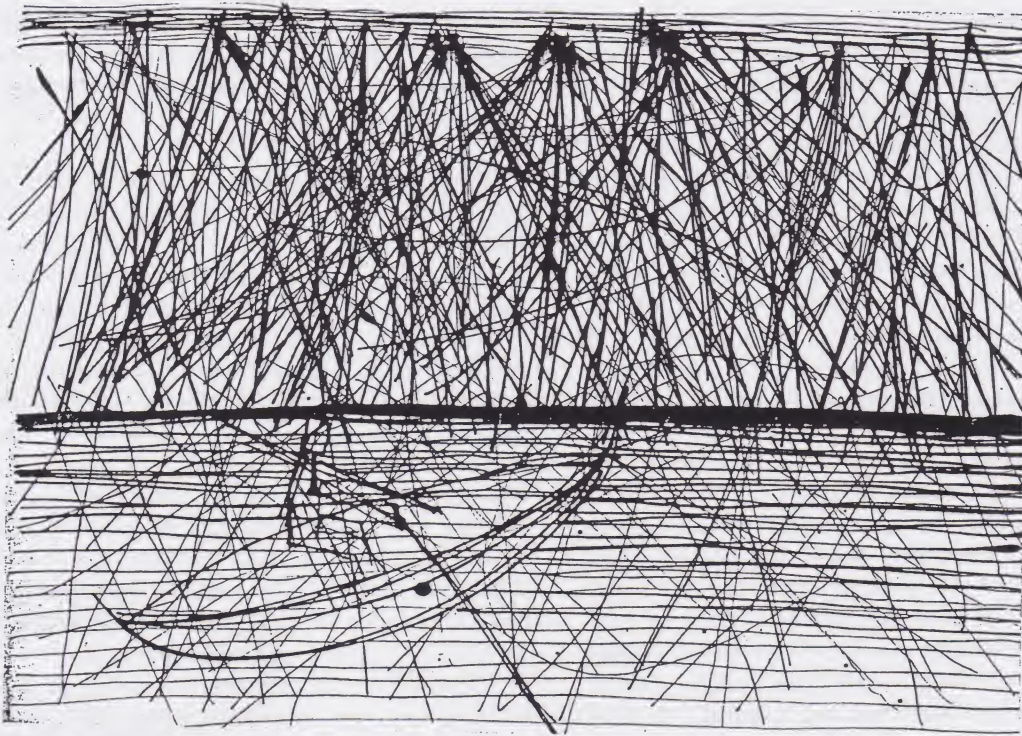
The enigmas of ideology are degraded along with the hearts and minds of those that don't know how to solve them. The current lies of the economy and of politics talk on and on about the state of the critic. Where are the dangerous ideas? That in similar cities, with similar lines, with similar relations, with a similar look, with similar food, with similar work and similar controls, everyone doesn't rise up—isn't this perhaps an authentic enigma?

I see Empedocles, Homer, Oedipus, Heracleitus, Diogenes and Socrates, and I think that liquidating the enigmas of power is simply the path for arriving at last at other enigmas, those of our own demons. Knowledge for living, however it comes, will always bring us face to face with ourselves. On the summit of Etna, in the middle of a forest, in wandering or under dung.





# *Alienation, Marvelous Pursuits and the New Nomadic Sciences*



As I sit at this corporate-owned cafe, there are three cell phone conversations going on at once--the buzz of stressful leisure is in the air; life is so complex these days but at the same time its just too easy. Convenience is killing adventure even for those who can't afford it; convenience invades the environments that it touches and infects them with sterility. The panhandler in front of the shopping mall gains nothing from the appliances and fashions sold within yet she has to suffer just the same from the stifling, lifeless environment created by convenience that is for others.

How did the challenge which is such a fundamental part of living life get erased to such an extent in the most affluent pockets of the globe? The convenience and instantaneity of technology have removed the spark of many an adventurous passion; they took the distance out of space and the place out of time. But that's not the end of the story. Challenge dies when the will is decimated: split into 10 pieces, shattered only to be swept up and used by others. Individual power is destroyed when one is prevented from acting or thinking. Hyper-specialization creates a society in which no one person has power over their actions. One can either act on others' commands or command the actions of others; it is becoming increasingly difficult to simply act. The splitting of our wills is fundamentally tied to the split between the physical and the intellectual, which stems from the division between physical and intellectual labor.

Gothic journeymen traveled from place to place building cathedrals. In that time there were no architects who planned construction on paper, physically distant from the construction site. Journeymen on the other hand, both planned and built cathedrals. The state did not appreciate the journeymen's associations' tendency to strike, nor their ability to move as they pleased when work conditions were unfavorable. "The state's response was to take over the management of the construction sites, merging all the divisions of labor together in the supreme distinction between the intellectual and the manual, the theoretical

and the practical, fashioned after the difference between 'governors' and 'governed'. (Deleuze and Guattari, *Nomadology*, 29-30) By separating intellectual and physical labor the state took power away from both types of workers. The manual laborers could then only build what others had planned and the planners--who in economic and political terms were the more powerful of the two groups--no longer had the capacity to build anything at all.

Hobbies are forms of alienated leisure, compartmentalized parts of one's life, past-times whose purpose is to fill our



time with countable accomplishments and enjoyments. At my piano lesson which I have to pay for, between 4 and 5 o'clock on Monday I will review lesson four. They are additions to our lives not multiplications or proliferations. While the hobby is alienated leisure, a past-time that is born from a shattering of the will and the divisions of labor and time within capitalist societies, the marvelous pursuit is an attempt to find paths out of alienation, an attempt to put the pieces back together again by refusing to conceive of human action as divisible into the physical and the mental. It is also an attempt to feel the rush of a life of challenge in which one can both make decisions and act. The marvelous pursuit is born from the desire to create playful complexity in a desert of simplistic convenience. A hobby is a form of consumption, the marvelous pursuit on the other hand, is a rejection of commodified convenience, it can't be bought because it has no price. The person who reads Aramaic poetry on the sidewalk, the cramped city dweller who has an intricate knowledge of ferns, the person who can play a sonata with a blade of grass, these people interact with the things around them and the spaces they pass through in unexpected ways and make these places and moments their own. A sidewalk could be a place to pass by one one's way from home to work or it could become a place to read Aramaic poetry to passers by. A marvelous pursuit refuses socially ascribed use. People learn such socially useless things as the names of fern and the grammar of dead languages because they are bored with the mind-dumbing options dished out to them on TV. Marvelous pursuits are a means to resist alienation from one's environment because they are a temporary means to make that environment one's own, by ascribing ones own, often bizarre, value for things and spaces.

The marvelous pursuit often creates complexity but a complexity which is opposed to that of the technician. The 'master' of an marvelous pursuit can never be an engineer because the marvelous is by nature useless to society (and therefore to capital). The value in marvelous pursuits lies in their self-creation which evades both use-value and exchange value. These pursuits may or may not have revolutionary potential, but it is very difficult for capitalism to recuperate them precisely because they are so useless. A marvelous pursuit could be a nomadic science--a traveling or a crossing--or it could get you nowhere: it is an attempt that might fail, a move away from alienation which may lead you in a circle back to the same spot, to sit on the pile of glass shards and wait for the next possible way out.

Another response to living in a society that's become just too convenient is DIY. Having grown up in late capitalist societies where things are bought not made, the youth of the richer countries often rebel by learning to do it themselves. Some buy land and move to the country to grow food, other's learn to restore an abandoned building and pirate electricity and so on. This is a healthy response to growing

up in useless culture, where people reach adulthood without knowing how to build, make or grow much of anything. Learning to make things we use ourselves instead of buying them is a fundamental and necessary part of creating a non-capitalist stateless society. Of course this cannot destroy capitalism, which is expansive and cancerous and must be attacked, but is a way to take parts of our lives back from capital in a direct way.

At times the DIY spirit is infused with a sense of practicality that is very utilitarian. In this country, it sometimes has a tinge of the "good ol' American can do." In this case I mean a utilitarianism that is born from a capitalist culture in which material goods are worshipped. That which is useful is that which produces something tangible, and the greater the quantity the better. Use is often determined by one's conception of survival, that which is most necessary for survival is most useful, but of course one's conception of survival will always be cultural. Counter-cultural types are not without mainstream cultural baggage, and in spite of a virulent rejection of materialism on one level they will think they need things to survive that a hunter gatherer simply couldn't find uses for. So even one's conception of survival is cultural, and in our culture survival is drenched with materialism. In societies that are highly capitalist the common conception of use-value will be completely tied up with exchange value; money is often a fundamental part of people's conception of an object's use. The most extreme manifestations of such a utilitarian mentality within the DIY subcultures are punk DIY businesses. The utilitarianism of the capitalist grid makes us tools. It is based on a practicality which has been directed away from one's situation to a complex set of systems; not to meeting an individual or group's needs but to meeting the need of the grid of the state-capital relation as a whole. That is why this type of practicality is so quantitative, it is shaped by capital's game of money's numbers.

The privileging of the physical over the mental is just as absurd as privileging the mental over the physical, since the two are impossible to separate within human experience. I would guess that the tendency to separate the two has become much more common since the separation between manual and intellectual labor has become so all pervasive. The privileging of a concrete material outcome is a kind of utilitarianism that can serve capitalism's production centers well and the privileging of the intellectual can serve the class divisions that have accompanied the division between manual and intellectual labor.

There is much talk these days in the media about the marvels of artificial intelligence, computers are constantly referred to as if they function in a similar way to the human mind and the mind is referred to as if it functions like a computer: mechanically and virtually. It is possible that some forms of anti-intellectualism are reactions to the



increasing displacement of action into the virtual, into the placelessness of cyberspace. Could this be the result of a desire to feel the soil beneath one's feet, to exist more fully as a physical, sensual being, to be part of a space time that isn't a series of freeze-frame instants like that of e-mail (7:37 EST Dear Julio,...)? Sometimes I have noticed people conflate the mental and the virtual, they impose all of the alienating qualities of the virtual onto the mental: the mental is separate from action and the physical, mental space is as placeless as cyberspace. For some the experience of acute social alienation makes it desirable to lose one's ability to distinguish between oneself and one's surroundings; some look for a mystical solution to their alienation. Some want to lose consciousness of the separation between the soil and their feet. But how does one feel the soil beneath one's feet without consciousness? But of course there are a myriad of ways in which humans can relate to their environment that lie between approaching it with removed mechanical calculation on the one extreme or attempting to achieve mystical union with it on the other. If one were indeed able to achieve a mystical state would this take away social alienation? Such attempts to overcome alienation ignore the very social relations that caused one to be alienated in the first place.

The development of the technological means to reproduce and transmit words, sounds and images has corresponded with a growing social alienation. That is, the development of technological means to increase communication between people that are far away has corresponded to a growing distance between those that are nearby. From this growing alienation grew the desire to overcome it. Milan Kundera has written about a phenomena called graphomania: the desire to see one's writing in print, the desire to gain recognition and fame from one's writings. He views this as being directly related to the alienation between people who are physically near to each other. Lacking connection with those nearby we crave recognition from those far away. In the islands of the Massim region of Papua New Guinea people who are separated by water become known through trade and the gifting of decorated shells, every kula shell is unique and everyone knows who made it. The type of fame that a society creates is directly related to its communication technology, in the islands of where kula shells circulate each shell stays unique because people do not mechanically reproduce them. Hence people become known by a smaller number of other people than those that are famous in our society but the quality of the knowledge that is spread about famous people is quite different.

The degree of alienation experienced by those who lived in the time of the advent of print capitalism was not as acute as the alienation between people in today's massified societies. In turn we have much more elaborate means for those that are very distant to communicate with words, sounds and images. The nature of fame has changed along with the level of social alienation and the technological means of communication, a Hollywood movie star's name and image is known by many more millions of people than the most famous early European novelists were in their time. Nowadays it is quite easy to become known, to spread one's name around the internet for example while communicating very little. Similar to this type of "fame" is that of success. Success is as colorless as money, it doesn't matter what makes one successful just like it doesn't matter what makes one rich. Success is the most impersonal kind of fame; it is the general equivalent of fame. Thus, success is no longer an adjective, it has become an abstract noun. "He is successful." As unique connections with specific reachable, touchable people dissolve, the need for general and wider recognition grows. The extreme result of this is the desire for success in the abstract, where there is no particular desire to be successful at only one thing, to be a successful banker is interchangeable with being a successful novelist. Soon children will begin to tell their parents: "When I grow up I want to be successful." The quest for fame is bound to be a frustrated

**Arbruania**, a forested land of Antarctica where GPS doesn't work, and the climate is Mediterranean due to geothermal fissures that reach to great depths. The sap of each tree is an unique type of beer that flows continuously from the tallest branches. And the rocks, heated by the earth, spout fine wine from their cracks. There are amazing animals and monsters only found in Arbruania, but there are no indigenous people. Yet one can find their way there, although most fail. The only people who seem to reach Arbruania are nomadic Cronopios, who, with no practical plan, follow marvelous pursuits and find themselves in Arbruania. The Fama, of course, are too self-satisfied to ever undertake such a journey, and the Esperanzas and yuppie Esperanzas--the lowest type--calculate their options and hedge their bets, never taking a step that might have an unpredictable result: they are assured to never arrive, because they never really leave.

In order to avoid the slithering and jumping predators of the ground and the great chasms that reach to the hot center of the earth, the Cronopios who do come to Arbruania learn to travel by swinging from tree to tree on vine-swings that grow naturally from every tree. Although practically everything is edible in Arbruania and every taste can be foraged with little effort--dream up a taste and you will find it growing on the tree that you inhabit--all one needs to live is the flowing beer of the Arbruvian trees and the rock wine.

As the Cronopios swing from tree to tree they meet by chance and always toast each unique one with the extraordinary brew of the specific tree upon which they landed. Usually small bands of Balkan song birds follow the Cronopios cycling through the 6200 plus songs they sing.



It is more of a challenge to taste the wine that spurts from rocks lying on the ground. None of the vines get close enough, but if one ties a vine around one's toes and drops from the top of a tall tree the vine will stretch long enough so that, for just the briefest moment, one's mouth can reach the stream of wine that gushes upward warm and sweet from the rocks below. This is the only danger in Arbruania.

And Cronopios, who always love a good challenge, when groups meet in a certain tree and party for some time, dancing the Balkan branch jig, as a matter of course convince each other to take the perilous plunge in turn, thus attracting beasts of all variety, breed, and persuasion. On such beautiful nights, it is not uncommon for a Cronopio, once quenched of thirst, not to return on the upward journey, and instead become a feast for other kinds. The Balkan song birds will break into a somber dirge, and the Cronopios will give long speeches and toast the brave, unique one and their famous, marvelous pursuits and adventures, then return to story telling, dancing, sing, and, of course, drinking. (Early 21st century @mberian story, found in the Cortazaranian Xcyclopidia).

quest because it is fueled by a desire for connections with those nearby which paradoxically results in a search for connections with those distant, the latter can never result in the former; like mystical oneness it can not truly satisfy a desire to overcome social alienation.

Western navigation depends on a global system of coordinates (latitude and longitude, now instantaneously measured by GPS) whereas Polynesian navigation depends on local knowledge that varies (the patterns of waves currents and winds, the types and habits of sea birds), adequations instead of universal principles applied to particulars. In Nomadic Science "if there are still equations, they are adequations, inequations, differential equations irreducible to the algebraic form and inseparable from a sensible intuition of variation. They seize or determine singularities in the matter instead of constituting a general form." (Deleuze and Guattari, *Nomadology*, 32) The practicality of adequations is not a practice of imitation or the mere imposition of codes, plotting points on the grid. Whereas modern science involves the splitting between observer and observed for the sake of experimentation (the word science comes from the Indo-European word skei which meant to cut or separate), and a thus a split between the physical object of study and the scientist's removed deductions, nomadic science involves an intimacy between the nomad and her surroundings. To equate is to impose conceptual equality between a particular and an absent abstraction. The practicality of equations the impositions the external decisions through equalizing systems of thought, grids invented in other places and times, perhaps on other continents.

Many new kinds of nomadic sciences have been created, even in those societies where modern science is most advanced. Nomadic science can be a means to move away from an alienated existence, to move away from the options dished out by capital and create other ways to live. The skills necessary to make an abandoned building inhabitable, learning how and where to dumpster dive, how to live and travel without money, the skills of sabotage, all of these pursuits could become nomadic sciences, lines of flight out of our alienated existence. Insurrection cannot use the equations of modern science but must instead use the adequations of nomadic science. This is because social problems are unsolvable; there are no formulas that will eliminate them. We must instead feel the patterns of the waves, for amidst the unpredictability of the storm there are still discernible patterns that could guide us to the other side.





# A BALANCED ACCOUNT OF THE WORLD:

## A Critical Look at the Scientific Worldview

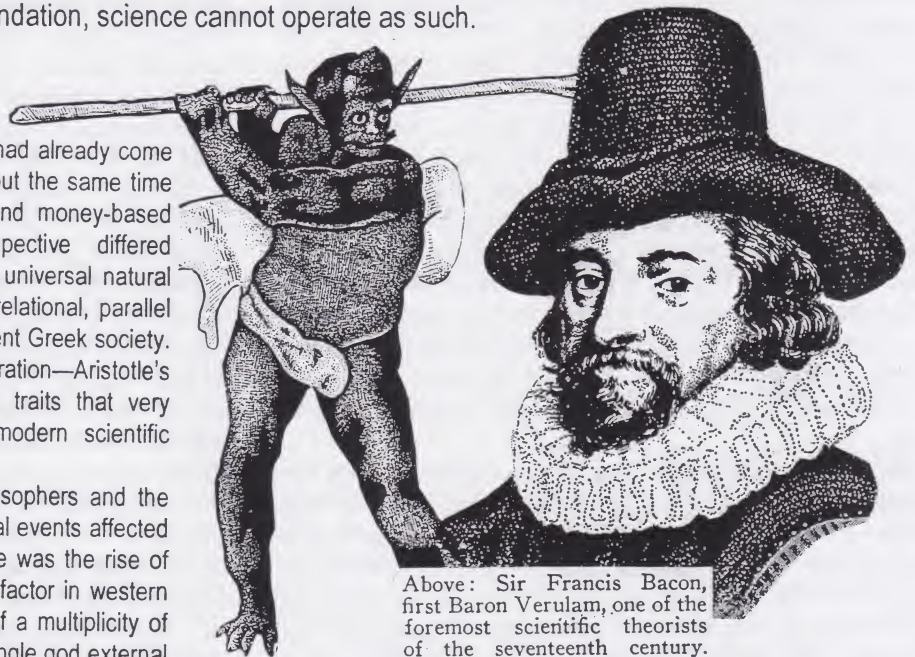
The origin of modern science in the 16th and 17th centuries corresponds with the origins of modern capitalism and the industrial system. From the beginning, the worldview and methods of science have fit in perfectly with the need of the capitalist social system to dominate nature and the vast majority of human beings. Francis Bacon made it clear that science was not an attempt to understand nature as it is, but to dominate it in order to twist it to the ends of humanity—in this case meaning the current rulers of the social order. In this light, science must necessarily be subjected to social analysis by anyone claiming to call the present social reality into question.

Science is not simply a matter of observing the world, experimenting with its elements and drawing reasonable conclusions. Otherwise, we would have to recognize children, so-called primitives and a good many animals as excellent scientists. But the practical experiments carried out by all of us every day lack a few necessary factors, the first and most important of which is the concept of the universe as a single entity operating under universal, rational, knowable laws. Without this foundation, science cannot operate as such.

Of course, the idea of universal natural laws had already come into existence in ancient Greece, arising at about the same time as written law for governing the city-states and money-based commerce. But the ancient Greek perspective differed significantly from that of modern science. The universal natural laws of Greek philosophy were fundamentally relational, parallel to the political and economic institutions of ancient Greek society. Thus this conception tended to promote moderation—Aristotle's "golden mean"—and an avoidance of hubris, traits that very clearly do not find their equivalent in the modern scientific perspective.

Between the time of the ancient Greek philosophers and the origin of modern science, two significant historical events affected the western view of the world. The first of these was the rise of the Christian religion as the central dominating factor in western thought. This worldview replaced the concept of a multiplicity of gods who were part of the world with that of a single god external to the universe who created it and controls it. It additionally declared that the world had been created for the use of god's favored creature, the human being, who was to subdue and rule it. The second significant event was the invention of the first automatic machine to play a significant role in public social life: the clock. The full significance of the invention of the clock in the development of capitalism, particularly in its industrial form, is a tale in itself, but my concern here is more specific. By materializing the concept of a non-living thing that could nonetheless move on its own for the populace, the clock gave an understandable basis for a new conception of the universe. Together with the idea of a creator external to the universe, it provided the basis for perceiving the unity of the universe as a clockwork created by the great clockmaker. In other words, it was essentially *mechanical*.

So religion and a technological development laid the basis for the development of a mechanistic view of the universe and with it of modern science. Recognizing the importance of religion in



Above: Sir Francis Bacon, first Baron Verulam, one of the foremost scientific theorists of the seventeenth century.

providing this ideological framework, it should come as no surprise that most early scientists were ecclesiastics, and that the sufferings of Galileo and Copernicus were exceptions to the rule, useful in developing the mythology of science as a force of truth fighting against the obscurantism of superstition and dogma. In reality, the early scientists were generally working for one or another of the various state powers as integral parts of the power structure, following the same path as one of the best known among them, Francis Bacon, who had no problem with reporting people like Giordano Bruno, who expressed 'heretical' ideas, to the church authorities.

But the scandals of science, like those of the church, the state or capital, are not the substance of the problem. The substance lies in the ideological foundations of science. Basically relational views of the universe—whether the legalistic one of the ancient Greek or the more fluid views of people who lived outside civilization—imply that an understanding of the universe would



come from attempting to view it as holistically as possible in order to observe the relationships between things, the connections and interactions. Such a viewpoint works well for those who have no desire to dominate the universe, but rather only want to determine how to interact with their environment in order to fulfill their desires and create their life. But the capitalist need for industrial development required a different worldview.

If the universe is a machine and not an interrelationship between a myriad of beings, then one does not achieve an understanding of it through simple observation and direct experimentation, but through a *specialized form* of experimentation. One cannot come to an understanding of how a machine works simply by observing it as it functions in its environment. One needs to break it down into its parts—the gears, the wheels, the wires, the levers, etc.—in order to figure out what each part does. Thus, a foundational aspect of the method of modern science is the necessity of breaking everything down into its parts, with the aim of achieving the most basic unit. It is in this light that one can understand why scientists think that it is possible to learn more about life by cutting a frog open in a laboratory than by sitting by a pond observing frogs and fish and mosquitoes and lily pads actually living together. The knowledge science pursues is quantitative knowledge, mathematical knowledge, utilitarian knowledge—a type of knowledge that transforms the world into the machine it claims the world is. This sort of knowledge cannot be drawn from free observation in the world. It requires the sphere of the laboratory where parts can be experimented with outside of the context of the whole and within the framework of the ideological foundations of mathematics and a mechanistic worldview. Only parts that have been separated in this way can be reconstructed to meet the needs of those who rule.

Of course, the first parts that must be separated from this mechanistic whole are the scientists themselves. The factor that makes the experiments of animals, children, non-civilized people and untrained people within the modern world unscientific is our lack of so-called objectivity; we are too involved, still in intimate relationship with that with which we experiment. The scientist, on the other hand, has been trained to place himself outside of that on which she experiments, to use the cold rationality of mathematics. But this objectivity is really no different from the separation of a king, an emperor or a dictator from the people they rule. The scientist cannot step out of the natural world in any literal sense which would allow him to view it from beyond its borders (for all practical intents and purposes, this universe has no borders). Rather like an emperor from the heights of his throne, from her laboratory the scientist proclaims to the universe: "You will submit to my commands." The scientific worldview can really only be understood in these terms. The conceptions of the nature of the universe that have been put forth by modern science have not been so much descriptive as prescriptive, edicts proclaiming what the natural world must be forced to become: mechanical parts with regular, predictable motions which can be made to function as the ruling class that funds scientific research desires. It should come as no surprise then that the language of science is the same as the language of the economy and of

bureaucracy, a language devoid of passion and any concrete connection to life, the language of mathematics. What better language could one find for ruling the universe—a language that is at the same time utterly arbitrary and utterly rational?

So modern science developed with a specific purpose. That purpose was not the pursuit of truth or even knowledge except in the most utilitarian sense, but rather the atomization and rationalization of the natural world so that it could be broken down into its component parts which could then be forced into new, regularized, measured relations useful to the development of technological systems that could extract more and more components for the reproduction of these systems. After all, this was what the rulers wanted, and they were the funders (and thus financially the founders) of modern science.

With the mathematization of all things, what is singular in each thing disappears, because what is singular is beyond abstraction and therefore beyond mathematics. When that which is singular in beings and things disappears, the basis for passionate relations, relations of desire, disappears as well. After all, how does one measure passion? How does one calculate desire? The domination of instrumental reason has little room for any passion other than that deformed sort of greed that seeks to accumulate more and more of the standardized, commodified items available on the market and the money that makes them all equal in the strictest mathematical sense.

The various classification systems of science—which parallel systems used by state bureaucracies—certainly played a significant role in excluding the singular from the realm of science. But science uses another more insidious and irreparable method for destroying the singular. It attempts to break every thing down into its smallest possible components—first those units that are shared by every entity of a particular type, and then those that are shared by every entity that exists—because mathematics can only be applied to homogeneous units, units that can be equivalent. If early scientists had a tendency to experiment frequently with dead animals, including humans, it was because in death one dog or one monkey or one human is very much like any other. When pinned on a board in a laboratory with their bodies cut open, have not all frogs become equivalent? But this does not yet break things down adequately. Certainly such experimentation, whether with dead organisms or with non-organic matter allowed science to break the world down into components it could mold to fit into its well-measured, calculated, mechanistic perspective, a necessary step in the development of industrial technology. But mathematics and the corresponding mechanistic worldview were still quite clearly ideas that were being imposed on an unwilling and resistant world—particularly (or maybe just most noticeably) the human world, the world of the exploited who did not want their lives measured out in hours of work timed by the industrially accurate clocks of the boss, the exploited who didn't want to spend every day in the same repetitive task that is also being carried out by hundreds—or maybe thousands—of others in the same building, or one that is identical to it in order to earn the general equivalent for buying survival.

Physics has always been the science in the forefront of the





effort to make mathematics the inherent basis of reality. If one is to believe the myth, when the apple hit Newton on the head, it supposedly led him to come up with equations to mathematically explain the attraction and repulsion of objects. For some reason, this is supposed to make us think of him as a genius rather than a petty-minded, calculating businessman/scientist. (He was a stockholder in the famous East India Company which provided the financial basis for so many of Britain's imperialistic endeavors and head of the Bank of England for a time.) But Newton's law of gravity, Galileo's law of inertia, the laws of thermodynamics, etc. come across as mathematical constructs of the human mind that are imposed on the universe, just as their technological results—the industrial system of capitalism—was an imposition of this rationalized worldview into the daily lives of the exploited classes.

It should be clear from this that the scientific method was never the empirical method. The latter was based only on experience, observation and experiment *within* the world with no preconceptions, mathematical or otherwise. The scientific method, on the other hand starts from the necessity of *imposing* mathematical, instrumental rationality on the universe. In order to carry out this task, as I have said, it had to separate specific components from their environment, remove them to the sterility of the laboratory and there experiment with them in order to figure out how to conform them to this instrumental, mathematical logic. A far cry from the sensual exploration of the world that would constitute a truly empirical investigation.

Modern science has been able to continue developing not because it opens the way to increasing knowledge, but because it

has been successful at carrying out the task for which the state and the ruling class funded it. Modern science was never intended to provide real knowledge of the world—that would have required immersion in the world, not separation from it—but rather to impose a particular perspective on the universe that would turn it in to a machine useful to the ruling class. The industrial system is proof of the success of science at carrying out this task, but not of the truth of its worldview. It is in this light that we can examine the "advances" that constitute the "new physics"—relativity physics, atomic physics and quantum physics—because it is this post-Newtonian physics that succeeds in imposing the mathematical conception onto the universe to such a degree that the two come to be seen as one. In Newtonian physics, the universe is a material reality, a machine made up of parts the interactions of which can be "explained" (though, in fact, nothing is really explained) mathematically. In the "new" physics, the universe *is* a mathematical construct—matter simply being part of the equation—made up of bits of information. In other words, the "new" physics has a *cybernetic* view of the universe.

Relativity physics mathematizes the universe on the macrocosmic level. According to its theories, the universe is a "space-time continuum". But what does this mean? The "space-time continuum" is, in fact, purely a mathematical construct, the multi-dimensional graph of a complex equation. Thus, it is completely beyond empirical observation—strangely like cyberspace. Or not so strangely, if one considers the former as a model for the latter. Once again, it matters little if this picture of the universe is true. It *works* on a technological and economic level, and that has always been the bottom line for science.



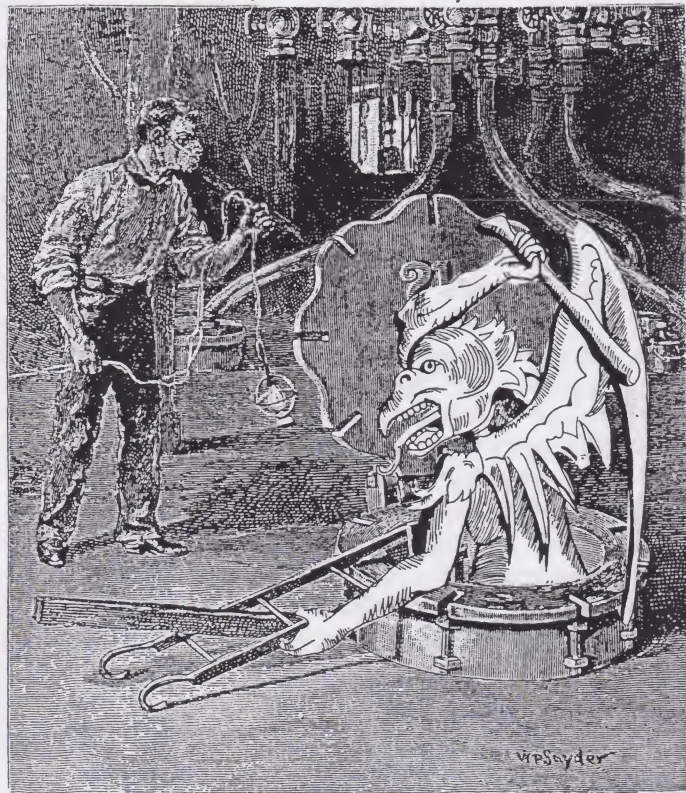
The "ultimate reality" that is the "space-time continuum"—this "reality" beyond our senses that the experts tell is more real than our daily experience (and who still doubts them in this alienated world?)—is constructed of bits of information called *quanta*. This is the microcosm of the total mathematization of the universe, the realm of quantum physics. Quantum physics is particularly interesting for the way in which it exposes the project of modern science. Quantum physics is supposed to be the science of sub-atomic particles. At first, there were just three: the proton, the electron and the neutron. These explained atomic weight, electricity, etc. and allowed for the development of nuclear technology and modern electronics. But too many mathematical discrepancies appeared. Quantum physics has dealt with these discrepancies by using the most consistent scientific method possible; it has formulated new equations in order to calculate away the discrepancies and called these mathematical constructs newly discovered sub-atomic particles. Once again, there is nothing that we can observe through our senses—even with the aid of tools such as microscopes. We are dependent on the claims of experts. But experts in what? Clearly, they are experts in constructing stopgap equations that uphold the mathematical conception of the universe until the next discrepancy arises—functioning in a way that parallels capitalism itself.

Relativity physics and quantum physics are often passed off as "pure science" (as if such a thing has ever existed), theoretical exploration without any instrumental considerations. Without even considering the role these branches of science have played in the development of nuclear weapons and power, cybernetics, electronics, and so on, this claim is also belied by the ideological interests of power that they serve. Together these scientific perspectives present a conception of reality that is completely outside of the sphere of empirical observation. Ultimate reality lies utterly beyond what we can sense and exists completely within the sphere of complex mathematical equations that only those with the time and education—that is the experts—are capable of learning and manipulating. Thus the "new" physics—like the old, but more emphatically—promotes the necessity of faith in the experts, of acceptance of their word over one's own perception. Furthermore, it promotes the idea that reality consists of bits of information that are connected mathematically and can be manipulated at will by those who know the secrets, the sorcerers of our age, the scientist-technicians.

Relativity and quantum physics have succeeded in doing what every branch of science would like to do; they have completely separated their sphere of knowledge from the realm of the senses. If reality is only a complex mathematical equation made up of bits of information, then thought experiments are certainly at least as reliable as experiments on material objects. It should be evident by now that this has been an ideal of modern science from the beginning. The separation of the scientist from the sphere of daily life, the sterile laboratory as the realm of experimentation, the blatant scorn of the early scientists for daily experience and what is learned through the senses alone are clear indications of the attitude and direction of science. For Bacon, for Newton, for modern science as a whole, the senses—like the natural world of which they are a part—are

obstacles to be overcome in the pursuit of dominance over the universe. Interacting with the world on a sensual level is much too likely to evoke passion, and the reason of science is a cold, calculating reason, not the passionate reason of desire. So the world of non-material experimentation opened by the "new" physics fits in well with the trajectory of science.

While some have tried to portray the concepts of relativity and quantum physics as a break with the mechanistic worldview held by science up to that time, in fact, this "new" view of the world as pure mathematical construct made up of bits of information was precisely the aim of science. It developed its material manifestation in cybernetic technology. The industrial mechanistic worldview gave way to the far more totalizing cybernetic mechanistic worldview, because the latter serves the purposes of science and its masters better than the former. The development of cybernetic technology and particularly of virtual reality opened the door to the possibility of non-material experimentation for those branches of science for which this had previously been impossible, particularly the life sciences and the social sciences. This world doesn't just provide a means of storing, organizing, categorizing and manipulating figures and information gathered during experimentation and research in the physical world; it also provides a virtual world in which one can experiment on virtual organic beings and systems, on virtual societies and cultures. And if the universe is nothing more than interchangeable bits of information in mathematical relationship to each other, then such experiments are on the same level as those carried out in the physical world. In fact, they are more reliable, since the obstacles of the senses and of the possible development of sympathetic emotion toward those upon which the scientist is experimenting do not come into play. No need to worry about the fact that





anything mathematically calculable, and thus programmable, can happen in the virtual realm; this merely shows the infinite technological possibilities to be found in the manipulation of bits of information.

It is worth noting that the "discovery" of DNA occurred just a few years before the beginning of what some have called the "information age". Of course, cybernetic and information technologies had existed for some time already, but it was in the early 1970's that these technologies began to penetrate into the general social sphere to a great enough extent to be able to affect how people viewed the world. Since we have already been torn from any sort of deep, direct relationship with the natural world due to the exigencies of the industrial system, most of our knowledge of the world comes to us indirectly. It is not really knowledge at all, but *bits of information* accepted by faith. It is, therefore, not so difficult to convince people that knowledge really is nothing more than an accumulation of these bits and that reality is simply the complex mathematical equation that encompasses them. It is a very short distance from this to the genetic perspective that life is simply the relationship between bits of coded information. DNA provides the precise interchangeable bits that are the necessary basis for this and, thus, provides the basis for the digitalization of life.

As we have seen, science has never been simply an attempt to describe what exists. Rather it seeks to dominate reality and make it conform to the ends of those who hold power. Thus, the digitalization of life and of the universe has the express purpose of breaking everything down into interchangeable bits that can be manipulated and adjusted by those trained in these complex techniques in order to meet the specific needs of the ruling order. There is no place in this perspective for a conception of individuality made up of one's body, one's mind, one's passions, one's desires and one's relations in an inimitable dance through the world. Instead, we are nothing more than a series of adjustable bio-bits. This conception is not without its social basis. Capitalist development, particularly in the last half of the 20th century, turned citizens (already *part* of the apparatus of the nation-state) into producer-consumers, interchangeable with all others in terms of the needs of the social machine. With the integrity of the individual already shattered, it is not such a great step to transform each living thing into a mere storage bank for useful genetic parts, a resource for the development of biotechnology.

Nanotechnology applies the same digitalization to inorganic matter. Chemistry and atomic physics provided the conception of matter as constructed of molecules which are constructed of atoms which are constructed of subatomic particles. The goal of nanotechnology is the construction of microscopic machines on a molecular level that will ideally be programmed to reproduce themselves through the manipulation of molecular and atomic structures. If one accepts the impoverished conception of life promoted by genetic science and biotechnology, these machines would arguably be "alive". If one examines some of the purposes their developers hope they will serve, it seems that they could, like spliced genes, function in the environment in ways very much like viruses. On the other hand, some of the descriptions of the

auto-reproductive function that is to be programmed into them give the frightening idea of air-borne active cancer cells.

Both biotechnology and nanotechnology can evoke horrific visions: large and small scale monsters, strange diseases, totalitarian gene manipulation, microscopic air-borne spying devices, intelligent machines with no more need of their human dependents. But these potential horrors do not strike at the heart of the problem. These technologies are reflective of a view of the world drained of wonder, joy, desire, passion and individuality, a view of the world transformed into a calculating machine, the worldview of capitalism.

The earliest modern scientists were mostly devout Christians. Their mechanical universe was a machine manufactured by God with a purpose beyond itself, determined by God. This conception of a higher purpose disappeared from scientific thought long ago. The cybernetic universe serves no other purpose than that of maintaining itself in order to maintain the flow of bits of information. On the social level where it affects our lives, this means that every individual is simply a tool for maintaining the present social order and can be adjusted as necessary to maintain the flow of information that allows this order to reproduce itself, information more precisely called *commodity exchange*.

And here the real function of science is revealed. Science is the attempt to create a system that can present a balanced account of all the resources in the universe, making them available to capital. This is why it must break the universe down into its smallest bits, bits that have a sufficient degree of identity and interchangeability to act as a general equivalent. This is why it must force the universe to conform to a mathematical construct. This is why ultimately a cybernetic model is best for the functioning of science. The real end of modern science from the start has been to render the universe into a great calculating machine that will render account of its own resources. So the function of science has always been to serve the economy and its development has been the search for the most efficient means of doing so. But the scientific accountants with their calculations, graphs, charts and ledgers are perpetually confronted with a recalcitrant reality comprised of entities that don't conform to numbers or measurements, of individuals who resist interchangeability, of phenomena that cannot be repeated—in other words, of things that incessantly unbalance the accounts. Scientists may attempt to retreat to the laboratory, to the thought experiment, to virtual reality, but beyond the door, beyond their minds, beyond the realm of cyberspace, the unaccountable still waits. So science, like the capitalist social order it serves, becomes a system of stopgap measures, of perpetual adjustment in the face of a chaos that threatens to destroy the economy. The world envisioned by science—the one it proclaims to be real as it tries to create it through the most excruciating technological bondage and torture—is an economized world, and such a world is one drained of wonder, joy and passion, of all that will not be measured, of all that will not give an account of itself.

Thus, the struggle against capitalism is the struggle against modern science, the struggle against a system that strives to know the world merely as measurable resources with a price, as interchangeable bits of economic value. For those of us who seek



to know the world passionately, who want to encounter it joyfully with a sense of wonder, different ways of knowledge are essential, ways that aim not at domination, but at pleasure and adventure. That it is possible to study and explore the universe in ways other than that of modern science has been shown by the reasonings of certain natural philosophers in ancient Greece, the knowledge of the sea of Polynesian navigators, the song-lines of Australian aborigines and the best explorations of certain

alchemists and heretics like Giordano Bruno. But I am not interested in models but in the opening of possibilities, the opening to relations with the world around us that are without measure—and the past is never an opening; at best, it is evidence that what exists is not inevitable. A conscious rebellion of those who will not be measured could open a world of possibilities. It's a risk worth taking.





# Where Do We Meet Face To Face

Alienation is not a psychological disorder, an inability on the part of certain individuals to adjust to a basically healthy society. Alienation is an inherent part of the present social order, objectively verifiable. The present social reality is based on a hierarchy of power that requires a system of representation through which society can reproduce itself. To maintain this social system, it is necessary that the lives of individuals be made alien to them, not self-created, but defined in terms of roles and rules of protocol for the proper relationships between these roles. The healthiest individuals in this society are precisely those who most deeply feel the anguish of their alienation, who know that real life is not here and, therefore, refuse to succumb.



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Alienation is as old as civilization itself since the dawn of civilization corresponds with the origin of institutionalized power structures. But resistance to alienation is just as old. Every structure created by those in power for the purpose of controlling the interactions of individuals has met with resistance from those who do not want to be controlled. However, since this resistance has remained, for the most part, unconscious, un-willful and, thus, incoherent, social control has advanced to the point where now it often seems that there is no place left where individuals can truly meet face to face.

The main purpose of city streets and sidewalks is commercial traffic—moving goods for sale and those who buy and sell them where necessary. They are intended to create a particular form of social relationship, one centered around a market economy. But

streets and sidewalks, along with city parks, became gathering places for those who simply wanted to talk and play and enjoy themselves. The so-called idle poor particularly found such settings useful for creating the interactions and pleasures that made up their lives—often to the detriment of commerce and the needs of the power structures. In recent years, streets and parks have been increasingly policed and restricted with laws against loitering, vagrancy, gathering in groups and sleeping outdoors. In addition, urban architecture and city planning, which have always reflected the interests of the ruling class, have become increasingly sterile and oppressive, creating an atmosphere in which conviviality and festivity are smothered. The most recent examples of city planning simply have no center at all. It's becoming increasingly obvious: the reference they propose is always somewhere else. These are labyrinths in which you are only allowed to lose yourself. No games. No meetings. No living. A desert of plate-glass. A grid of roads. High-rise flats. Oppression is no longer centralized because oppression is everywhere.

Even as alienation has increased and taken on more encompassing forms, festivals and holidays such as Carnival and Halloween have acted as vehicles for the expression of genuine life, its passions and desires. Precisely because these events are separated from an everyday existence in which the separation of one's life from oneself is the most essential quality, they have allowed people to temporarily re-appropriate their lives and passions—often protected by the anonymity of a mask; a crowd or generalized drunkenness. But these celebrations are being increasingly restricted and ordered when not completely suppressed. Concerns for public safety (conveniently forgotten when real dangers such as automobile traffic, industrial pollution or job-related accidents are at issue) are used as excuses for increased policing of such celebrations and their restriction to increasingly smaller, often enclosed spaces and highly orchestrated events. It is irrelevant that these alleged concerns for public safety are mostly based on hearsay and exaggeration. When these celebrations are restricted to small spaces and orchestrated events, commodification comes to dominate. Most of the permitted events become entertainment spectacles for which one must pay or temporary markets for the sale of junk. The genuine festivals of the exploited become increasingly illegalized by these processes, and the pallid, impoverished pseudo-festivals that are offered in their place are often too expensive for the poor—and too much like ordinary existence in this society to be attractive on any more than a superficial level anyway. The spirit of free play is being suppressed and channeled into the dispirited consumption of commodities.

The attacks on street life, both daily and festive, are essentially attacks on the exploited and marginalized of this society. The rich have long since retreated from the streets except as a means to get to or from work and the shops, preferring the imagined



security of their atomized existence in which all interactions happen through the proper channels. (Even in the business districts of most cities where these managers of the economy find it necessary on occasion to walk from one building to another, they will always be walking with their cell-phone to their ear, safely regulating how and with whom they interact.) But those at the bottom of the social hierarchy have little access to these channels, and the increasingly illegal sphere of street life has been where they can meet. And here they could meet face to face.

The increased restrictions on permitted interactions on the streets and in the parks did not put an end to relatively free interactions. Taverns and cafes continued to be gathering places for discussion, the sharing of news and ideas and occasionally even for the development of subversive projects. It is true that cafes and taverns have always been places of business, places where one is expected to buy, but they have also provided space where people can meet and interact with very little mediation. Now this is changing as well. Not even considering the fact that increasingly such businesses are instituting policies of kicking individuals who don't buy anything out, the environments themselves are being made inhospitable to real interaction. In the United States, most taverns are dominated by televisions and loud music. It is not uncommon for a tavern to have several televisions so that there is no place to turn to escape its domination. At times, the music may be fun to dance to, but when there is no way to get away from it, it becomes another attack against genuine, unmediated interaction. In a setting so unwelcoming to genuine conversation, it is easier to interact only with those you already know or to conform to the protocol of roles imposed by the social order.

Cafes remain outside of the realm of domination by the television and can still provide a setting for real interaction. But here as well there are trends which tend to move away from this. Probably the most insidious of these is the cyber-café. Along with coffee, these cafes offer computer use to their customers. Rather than talking to each other directly, people in these cafes drift into their own little cyber-world, checking out abstract and distant information or conversing electronically with people halfway across the globe. This sort of mediated interaction guarantees that ideas remain safely in the realm of opinion and makes practical projects extremely unlikely. This is not the setting from which movements such as dadaism or surrealism, or groups like the Situationist International are likely to spring.

The cyber-café is a trend that reflects the growing domination of the cybernetic over interactions of all kinds. The tedium of everyday interactions in the present world makes a virtual world very attractive to some. Certain cyber-utopians tell us that the development of computer technologies will put end to cities as we know them, as all (of the ruling and managing classes—the poor and exploited don't count in this vision) are able to work, play and shop through their computers from suburban homesteads which they never have to leave—a more pastoral and ecological version of the luxury high-rise in which well-to-do people can live, work, play and shop without ever leaving the building. A darker, more realistic version of this vision sees the cities becoming

reservations for the excluded classes and other social misfits who can't or won't fit into this cybertopia. The laws and restrictions limiting the use of streets and parks that are currently being put into effect are aimed precisely at these excluded ones who would be the urban dwellers of this vision. The well-to-do suburbanite is already well integrated into a system where face-to-face interaction is an anachronism to be dealt with through a protocol of surface courtesy which reinforces isolation and the atomized existence of well-oiled cogs.

This cybernetic vision, however, whether in its utopian or dystopian version, does not take the exigencies of class struggle into account. Would it, indeed, be in the interest of the ruling class to bring the exploited together in an even more concentrated manner? Could the mechanisms for creating social consensus and public opinion continue to function adequately for the maintenance of social peace in a situation of such unmitigated misery? In fact, this dystopian vision is comparable to the presently existing detention centers for undocumented aliens. These centers, which exist throughout Europe, in the United States, in Australia and so on, are places of frequent unrest and revolt (as are the urban ghettos that presently exist). In fact the very existence of these camps are indicative of a process that is going on now that is very different from the one suggested by the dystopian perspective described above. Many cities are now being heavily gentrified with the ruling classes and their managerial lackeys moving into the center of these cities, driving out the urban exploited, leaving them with nowhere to go. In poorer countries, people who have lived on the land, taking care of their needs for themselves, are being driven off their land, proletarianized and forced into a precarious urban existence that often drives them to immigrate. In fact, rather than concentrating the exploited classes in the cities, the general trend at present seems to be for capital to force them into increasing precariousness, with no place to stay and an increasing difficulty for maintaining ongoing relationships. This could be perceived as a frontal assault by the ruling class against face-to-face interactions among the exploited, particularly those of the sort that might stimulate revolt.

Of course, this process of deconcentration is gradual and the exploited do continue to have many opportunities for face-to-face interaction. So it is presently necessary for the rulers to provide a substitute for such interactions which can act as a pacifier and can guarantee that when explosions of rage do occur those involved are not really used to talking with each other or acting together. Thus recreation must be made less interactive. Of course, this tendency toward increasingly solitary and atomized forms of recreation is not only found in the opportunities for commodified play available to the poor, but throughout society. The affluent must also be kept from real interactions of pleasure, because otherwise they might realize that the present society only offers them a larger portion of the generalized impoverishment of life that is this society's main product. Thus, television, films, video games, computer games and virtual reality provide forms of recreation in which millions of individuals passively observe the same simulated events, maybe making the minimal response of pushing a button or flicking a switch to stimulate a programmed



reaction that is the same for everyone who makes that response. Real action and interaction have no place in these recreational non-activities. Even dungeons-and-dragons type games are so thoroughly programmed that no real interaction can happen among the players who must completely transform themselves into roles determined by the rules of the game, acting in terms of these rules which often seem like the random hand of fate. In other words, these games are merely fantasies mirroring the present society. The trend toward mediated interaction and play, particularly in its cybernetic form, has caused some people to lose touch with reality, undermining their ability to distinguish actual life from simulated life. People become more gullible, open to all sorts of lies and deceptions. This is probably a major factor in the recent rise in religious and superstitious beliefs. When television, films and computer technologies can portray supposedly supernatural events in ways that appear real and when people's experiences are increasingly mediated through these technologies, then such mystical paradigms are enforced in their minds as methods for interpreting the world, and the healthy skepticism that is so necessary for effective resistance to authority is obliterated. Strange events may very well happen, but any tale of such an event that reinforces mystical, religious, occult or superstitious belief is immediately suspect, because it fits in too well with the social insanity imposed by an increasingly mediated existence.

This society is becoming more insane every day. Involvement with actual people and actual environments is being suppressed along with any space—physical or psychological—in which individuals can create their own interactions. This alienation, which is imposed on everyone whether they are aware of it or not, can be viewed as a kind of schizophrenia, but this insanity is not that of individuals; it is society as a whole that is schizophrenic. And the methods by which it is imposing its insanity are bureaucratic and intellectual with the latter methods becoming increasingly dominant.

As I have already said, the imposition of alienation has never been without resistance. Recently, I read about various cafes and taverns opened with the intention of promoting face to face interaction by people who desired revolution. In the early twentieth century, hoboes created informal "hobo colleges" for the same purpose. People such as Emma Goldman or Ben Reitman might speak and the hoboes and others present would discuss the speech with passion and intellectual incisiveness. Such projects were not revolutionary in themselves, but they were a form of resistance to increasing alienation. In Chicago, when Bughouse Square, a park where anarchists, communists and others who opposed the present social order gathered, argued and discussed how to fight that social order, was closed down, several cafes and taverns were opened with the specific purpose of providing a space for the same sort of intense, passionate discussions of how to transform the world. But where are those cafes and taverns now? They were a form of resistance, but they were not revolution, and as businesses they couldn't keep going forever since profit wasn't their motive. They were a form of resistance to alienation that was still trapped in the logic of that most basic form of alienation, the economy, a logic that inevitably

killed these projects.

Another form of resistance to alienation is described in a pamphlet entitled, "The Battle for Hyde Park: ruffians, radicals and ravers, 1855-1994" (available on line at [www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Senate/7672](http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Senate/7672), or e-mail them at [practicalhistory@hotmail.com](mailto:practicalhistory@hotmail.com) to find out how to get a paper copy). This pamphlet documents the potential for festivity and free play in the context of social conflict. It describes four riot situations in Hyde Park in which free play was an essential element. In these situations, the potential for insurrection could be seen. The last of the events described happened in 1994 and was witnessed by those who put the pamphlet together. Unfortunately, in their attempt to give an overall historical view, the writers of the article describing this demonstration turned festive riot completely ignored the question of personal interactions and the role of affinity in this situation. Certainly these elements are essential for understanding this event. When these questions are ignored, events such as those of October 9, 1994 in London remain, for us, events separated from life, events that happen purely by accident, having no relation to our projectuality as insurgent individuals, because we (and even most of those who participated) have not been able to develop an understanding of how such events connect to our lives and the affinities we develop. An analysis along these lines may be essential if events such as these are not to be carried along in the trajectory of alienation that I have been describing which would transform such riots into events like tornadoes, earthquakes, blizzards—something that happens to people, not something they create.

As long as the present social context exists, alienation will continue to expand, making our lives ever more distant from us and our interactions ever more controlled by the protocol of the commodity and of the institutions of power. So it is essential to destroy this society, to raze it to the ground. But what can such a vision mean on a practical level right now? It is essential to resist the progress of alienation with all our might, creating projects for

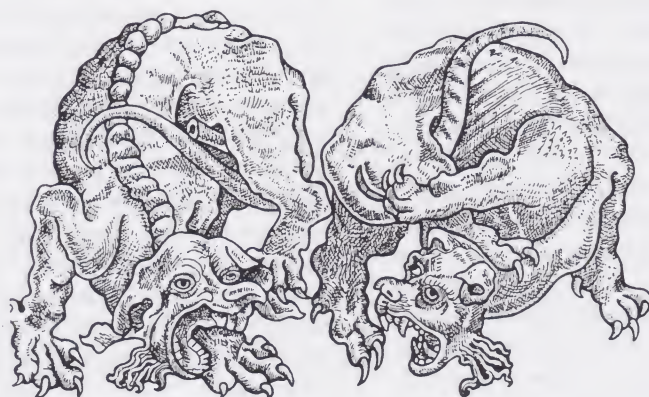


ourselves which promote real interactions outside of the roles and relationships that social reproduction demands. This resistance must be willful, a conscious refusal of the imposition of alienated and impoverished interactions. This resistance needs to move beyond being merely defensive to become an offensive attack against the institutions and structures of alienation. This attack needs to take up every weapon available to it: detournement, subversion, sabotage, vandalism, irony, sarcasm, sacrilege...and,



yes, physical arms where appropriate—carefully avoiding any specializations. Each would use the weapons she finds most appropriate in terms of his situation and singularity, but there is no use in judging those who choose weapons we did not choose. I know such a call frightens most anarchists. It calls them from the little world of their subculture, their micro-society with its own alienating roles and structures which parallel those of the larger society, into a realm of real risk where imagination must be used to create insurrectional projects based on actual affinity between

singular individuals. All of the models and structures in which we've taken refuge must be fiercely examined and critically dismantled, and we must learn to depend on ourselves. If we do not wish to find ourselves in a world where no one really lives, where no one really knows anyone else, where everyone has become a mere cog in a machine meshing with other cogs but remaining truly alone, then we must have the strength to attack alienation in every way we can. Otherwise, we may just find there is no place left where we can meet face to face.



## MONEY AND *LOGOS*

By  
M.D.P.

Is there a relationship between the birth of the rational mentality and the development of commercial economy? In the 7th century B.C.E., a whole series of tightly connected social changes took place in the Ionian Greek cities of Asia Minor. It is precisely during this epoch that the rational mentality arose, at the time when maritime commercial culture began to experience its first great development.

In a short period of time, things moved from tribal social structures and ancient monarchy to the political form typical of the Greek city-states. The kinship and religious ties of the landed aristocracy gave way to a new kind of social ties in which the individual was valued above all on the basis of his property: luxury very quickly becomes a political institution. The same aristocrats who had formerly based their power on land ownership and warrior virtue began to acquire wealth first by rigging pirate ships for sea robbery and later by rigging merchant ships for commerce itself. The aristocrat started to invest his property on the sea.

A new form of domination arose, a plutocratic aristocracy that began to concentrate political power and the administration of justice in itself. The wealth that came from the land allowed it to arm merchant ships which reached the farthest ports of the Mediterranean. The usurious loan was developed to a high degree increasingly immiserating the peasant class. Class struggle developed between the peasants and the aristocrats. A third class soon intervened as an intermediary, namely, the merchant class. They were the ancient demiurges, that is to say, the first master artisans who were accustomed to taking their work from city to city, who acquired power through commerce. They were the cadets of the noble class who had been excluded from hereditary rights and therefore began to

acquire wealth on the sea. In short, it was about a new wealthy class that rose with the development of maritime commerce. This new class at times sided with the aristocracy and at times with the people, increasing or moderating the class conflicts in accordance with its own interests.

The dominant regime is thus political particularism, the spirit of competition taken to the highest degree, the domination of the census and of wealth. The ruling oligarchy was forced to take an ever-increasing interest in the political events of the city. It gradually lost its nobility and superiority of descent as personal wealth increased; the importance of family and birth diminished in the face of the individual and of money. Class struggles sharpened to such

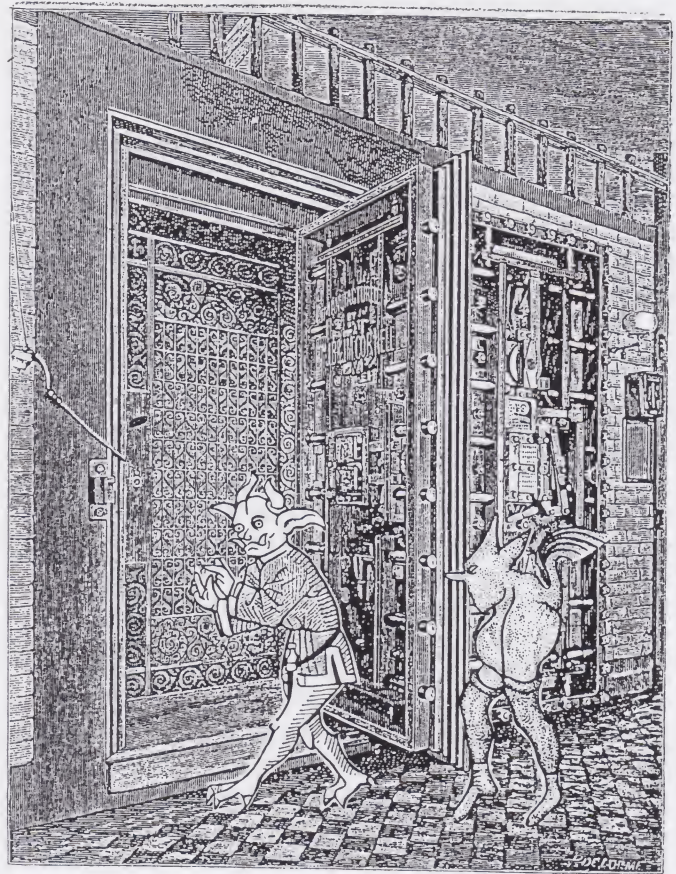


a degree, particularly in the commercially wealthiest cities, that at a certain point a new form of mediation intervened in order to annul it: *legislation*. Written law (*nomos*) to which citizens were subject and to which they could turn in order to demand their rights became necessary. The *right* is separated from politics. This is a fact of enormous historical importance that was developed to the fullest extent not so much in the Greek colonies of Asia Minor as in the western colonies of the Greater Greece. We will see that it was really here that mathematical thought developed and that the philosophical school that had Parmenides as its greatest representative arose.

The domination of the dynastic oligarchy became political domination; the aristocracy of money replaced that of birth; power was not protected by the traditions of nobility but by written laws that sanctioned the power of money. Wealth became an essential factor for having political rights and participating in the public thing. The aristocrats converted the harvests of their lands into money and assembled slaves for their mines. They gave up piracy for commerce which was more secure. Piracy was the response of the warrior aristocracy to the new merchant class. At first the aristocrats defended their privileges by fighting the sea traders, but later they found it more useful and profitable to become merchants themselves. On the other hand, the new wealthy class, who were at first despised by the nobles in the same way that a pirate chief despises the captain of a merchant ship, acquired ever greater prestige and invested their money in land so that soon there was nothing to distinguish them from the nobles and the warriors. The aristocrats who became merchants and the merchants who became landowners are the trustees of a new form of power, the plutocratic oligarchy.

Beneath the rich nobles and the new rich, a middle class formed that enriched itself through marriage or auspicious speculation or was forced into agricultural or manual labor through impoverishment. Below this middle class were the peasants and artisans. The former were subjected to the usury of the rich and forced to sell the products of their land at low price in order to buy manufactured objects at a high price. The latter, the urban population—consisting of artisans, tradesmen, manual laborers and mercenaries—formed an urban proletariat mainly concentrated in the markets and ports. It was not strong enough to impose its will, but was strong enough to form a troublesome element.

From the 7th century B.C.E. on, Greek history—and not just that of the Ionians of Asia—was characterized by a continuous succession of class struggles. These were precisely what led to the application of written and democratic laws which served the new rich class as a powerful weapon for combating the divine and hereditary rights of the aristocrats on the one hand and the demands of peasants and artisans on the other. The aristocrats lost the privilege of creating and interpreting the rules of social life according to the tradition of blood. The collective



responsibility of the *ghenos* and of the family gave way to that of the individual and of the citizen before the city-state. The power of tradition gave way to the power of law.

Another institution of fundamental importance arose in this period of major historical transformation. The coining of money with its value guaranteed by the state was actually invented in the 7th century B.C.E. in Asia Minor to facilitate trade between the Ionian cities and the most important cities of Lydia. The latter had already accumulated considerable wealth in trade with Mesopotamia, so much so that in that period the Lydians were considered the most capable merchants by way of land. The Ionians offered the merchants of the interior an opening to the sea. The Greeks of Asia Minor became the indispensable intermediaries in the trade with all the people who could not be reached by land. The naval power of the Ionians would rapidly increase replacing the older power of the Phoenicians.

Among the many innovations of those times, two factors in particular distinguished Greek commerce from that of the Phoenicians and were the source of its supremacy. The Greeks did not limit themselves to trading slaves or refined products like spices, jewels, precious cloth and the like by sea like the Phoenicians, but traded items of primary necessity and low cost such as oil and wine, ceramic jars, metals, fabrics and utensils, and they traded these things in great quantities. It is easy to understand how this type of commerce established completely new exchange



relationships between people. Attention is not paid to the quality of the material, but to the quantity. Trade not only serves rich and powerful monarchs and aristocrats of the more "civilized" people, but the widest range of social classes. Every people whether civilized or barbarian, every individual whether of the highest or lowest rank, is a potential buyer or seller of goods according to the Greeks.

There is another substantial difference. The Phoenicians, who could be considered the most daring navigators of the time due to their navigation skills and courage, faced the sea with tiny ships and built commercial trading centers on the coasts where they stopped as bases for their most distant dealings. The founding of trading centers is a characteristic aspect of Phoenician commerce. There are only a few exceptions to this, and the most important of these is the founding of a city such as Carthage, which quite quickly became economically powerful by being able to rebel against the Phoenicians and constitute itself as an independent naval power. Unlike the Phoenicians, the Ionians of Asia Minor established a sort of sea-based commerce with an essential characteristic that is completely new: *the establishment of colonies*.

It is not easy to enumerate all the causes of Greek colonization, but the most important of these could be considered the scarcity of tillable topsoil that led to the search for new territories; rising overpopulation connected to the increase in wealth; class struggle between rival factions within a single city and between cities that forced entire groups of citizens to make their exodus by sea. This last factor in particular must be taken into consideration since it is the typical expression of the establishment of new forms of social relationships, of the breakdown of ancient feudal kinship ties following the rise of a new social class of wealthy merchants, of the political and social instability that derives from it and of the political particularism of the *polis*.

## IN SEARCH OF STABILITY

The invention of money had a revolutionary effect on a whole series of planes, accelerating a social process of which it was itself one of the basic effects: the development of a maritime commercial sector within the Greek economy that even extended to products for common consumption, the creation of a new type of wealth that was radically different from landed wealth and the development of a new wealthy class whose activity was decisive in the social and political restructuring of the city. A new mentality and a new morality were born. The entire traditional conception of human excellence based on nobility of birth and warrior virtue were called into question and later destroyed by the power of money. Money became a social mark of value: it gave prestige and power. Emerging as a fitting human strategy to guarantee the ease of exchange between trading people, Money established a common denominator and a common measure between use values that are qualitatively

different. The goods had to be made comparable to each other in order to be traded; they had to be made equivalent to one another through a process of abstraction that ignores the difference in order to find the uniformity, that abstract and quantitative element that is exchange value. Every commodity came to be like every other; thus one person valued another because he possessed the same amount of money. The written law confirmed the process of quantification established by the circulation of money in its process of abstraction—all citizens were equal before the law just as they were before money; all could participate in the public thing and the government of the city with powers proportional to their wealth and everyone could acquire wealth through saving, commerce and speculation, independently of family relations, ancestral religion and the customs of birth.

The process of abstraction and quantification was manifested not only in money and law, but in other areas as well: the adoption of alphabetic writing, the promulgation of a civil calendar responding to the needs of public administration, the division of the city into zones defined on the basis of criteria of administrative convenience, the birth of mathematics and philosophy and, lastly, the concept of the *polis* itself. The city was not identified with any particular group, privileged family or specific activity; it was simply the ensemble of all the citizens whose social relationships, freed from ancient personal and familial bonds, were defined abstractly in terms of identity, interchangeability of roles, equality before the law.

The mathematical, rational, logical mentality arose in the Ionian colonies of ancient Greece at the same time as sea-based mercantile economic structures. The quantitative and abstract aspect of mathematics was joined with the process of abstraction and quantification implicit in commodity exchange.

The social transformation that marks the transition from the ancient monarchic and feudal regime to the city-state is connected to the analogous transformations in the fields of ethical and mythico-religious thought.

The ancient religious prerogative, through which those of royal and noble birth secured their power over the masses, lost its privileged character, expanding and spreading out until it was integrated almost completely into political institutions. A knowledge formerly prohibited and reserved for a privileged few became public domain; it was discussed in the circle of brotherhoods of sages that at this point no longer imposed any restrictions of rank and origin. The opening of common discussion on topics of a general order that were previously the subject of supernatural revelation, such as the origin of the cosmic order and the explanation of natural phenomena, led to the rise of *philosophy*.

The philosopher was no longer the ancient priest, trustee of a mystery at the service of royal power, but an individual belonging to a brotherhood in which free discussion had opened; later he would argue his opinion directly in the



crowded *agora*, making them subjects of public debate in which contradiction, dialectical reasoning and "proof" would have definitively gained the upper hand over supernatural revelation. The basic problem of the philosopher and the sage was the diffusion and publication of his ideas, placing them in dialectical relationship with his predecessors and successors. He had to take the potential rebuttals of his adversaries into account and was constrained to think in relationship to them. His task was to create schools of thought, teach and transmit ideas and knowledge while perpetually keeping the possibility of discussion open. Through words and writings he addressed himself to all citizens and all cities. The philosopher no longer had a homeland or traditions; rather one could say that he was a "world citizen". He traveled from city to city to discuss his ideas, to learn different things, to counterstrike, to argue. It was much more difficult to keep track of the city of one's origin than of the "school" to which one belonged; in fact, this was one of the small elemental gestures that characterized him. As Heracleitus asserted, the philosopher had to take hold of that which is common to every human being; he had to base himself on *logos* just as the city is based on law; the only law the philosopher obeyed was the law of reason. But the Heracleitean *logos*, the normative principle of nature, started to separate from nature; the original unity between being, becoming and norm was already damaged. The *logos* was not so much the normative natural principle as the normative human principle, that which ruled the behavior of people, their relationships among themselves and with



nature. But nature was subjected to a law that it did not itself create that was no longer immanent in it, a law that was imitated in the social order of the city-state that imposed its rules of conduct in all relationships of a person with himself, with other people and with nature, just as money, universal exchange value for all goods, imposed its law on the goods themselves and ruled the relations of people with each other in the realm of commercial exchange.

The same basic needs were also found in poetry before and during the time philosophy developed, starting with Homer. The sense of the transience and inconstancy of life and human destiny, the discomfort and restlessness of those who experienced a world turned upside-down and in continual transformation, appeared frequently in the poetry of this period, expressed in a very lively way. In the midst of such instability in life, the Ionian felt the urgent need to catch hold of anything firm and stable, the necessity of conceiving a unitary principle and permanent law of change. Therefore, he turned to the abstract concepts of *Fate*, *Necessity*, *Justice*, that served him as an anchor. These ethical concepts arose in the sphere of social life in response to the harsh struggles of cities, parties and classes and came to constitute not only the channel between the social sphere and the individual, but also between this and the surrounding natural world. And since long and dangerous sea voyages increased the awareness of the changeability and instability of all natural things even more, the problem of the search for stability and permanence acquired cosmic dimension; in other words, it became a philosophical problem. Speculation on the natural world, aimed at the search for a unitary law applicable to every transformation, found a basic point of reference in the earlier ethical conception and in the abstract concepts of *Necessity* and *Justice*. In the Ionian philosophies of the 7th century B.C.E. and consequently in Heracleitus, Parmenides, Empedocles and Democritus, the concepts of *Fate*, *Necessity* and *Justice* established the permanent, unitary principle of a universal and eternal law in the multiple varieties of phenomena. The word *cosmos* itself was derived from the military-political field, referring to an ordered arrangement. It would give birth to the term cosmology and reflected the mental sphere of philosophy.

The notion of a universal and stable law that rules human life first appeared in Greece in the Ionian epic poetry of the Homeric narratives. This notion was connected with the transition from a more ancient form of morality exalting the violent passions and warrior courage typical of the aristocracy to the more recent one in which courage and force were considered dangerous passions and surrendered their place to prudence and intelligence. The morality of the merchant replaced that of the warrior; the violence of reason and language replaced that of physical force, the calculated risk of the shrewd trader replaced the manifest risk of the noble warrior. Thus, a completely new mentality and ethic arose.



## FATE, NECESSITY, JUSTICE

Though always understood as the supreme regulator of all natural and human events, Fate was interpreted in two substantially different ways within the sphere of Ionian thinking. Sometimes it appeared as a dark mysterious force that blindly distributed the good and the bad among people. At other times, it appeared as a normative law, a rational and ethical principle of conduct that a person had to follow so as not to provoke punitive sanctions through the violation of a prescribed order. The first conception recalls the blind natural forces to which the seafarer was subjected and the uncontrolled, destructive forces liberated in the first bloody class struggles that marked the advent of a new society. In the lyric and tragic poetry of the more ancient era, the clear awareness of the misery of the human being who was subjected to a power that was greater than her and that he was utterly unable to control appeared continually. Thus, the original moral precepts of moderation arose. These did not so much draw attention to a need for measure and proportion as is frequently claimed, as to the awareness of the limited and dependent conditions of the human being of the time. But later, when the first written laws arose with the aim of annulling social differences and affirming the abstract power of money, the ancient decrees of *Fate* were definitively transformed into norms of moral conduct, a need for order and justice the violation of which inevitably led to sanctions aimed at restoring its validity. From this time on, it was no longer the blind violence of nature, but rather the human passions, the human passions that were considered the original source of the violation of the law of order and justice. Rebellion against the law of Fate could be considered reckless and still rouse a sense of secret admiration; rebellion against the norms of justice was simply considered pride and foolish arrogance and was punished as such. Only at this point did the transition to the new ethical perspective of mercantile society in which control of the passions, prudence, the use of reason and the insidious hidden violence of laws and norms of social conduct gain the upper hand over the open expression of desires, over violent emotion, over the force of arms and over recklessness seem fully evident. At this point, the power of the abstract value of exchange over ancient ties and social relationships was clearly manifested.

In the same way, the principle of *Necessity*, which corresponded to the primitive social situation in which the individual was completely at the mercy of great political upheavals and natural forces that the seafaring merchant was forced to face on the sea in extremely precarious conditions (leading to nostalgia for a more stable world and, thus, to reaction in the face of new historical events), gradually gave way to the principle of *Justice*. This occurred when a new social order began to be built, when instability and uncertainty began to give way to stability and permanence, in other words, when a balance based on the

common denominator of exchange value was established between the old and new social classes in struggle, a balance which accepted the power of money as law and established individual worth on the basis of wealth. But the new social stability was achieved abstractly through the promulgation of written law and the quantification and rationalization of all civic life. Even though social organization in general was subject to an abundance of stable laws, perpetual unending becoming, the game of changing fortunes and circumstances in which nothing is truly fixed or stable, ruled in the realm of concrete daily life. Only in the realm of the administration of justice and power did the abstract principle of permanence and immutability appear, that principle according to which the social world seems to be ruled by a single, inflexible law, the law of profit. This social situation found its correspondence in philosophy. From the 8th through the 6th century B.C.E., attention began to focus on permanence and on the laws of necessity, measurement and justice; the need to bring the multiple back to the unitary, becoming to being, became increasingly urgent. But no longer in the form of an inclusive, organic conception of nature according to which being is devoid of reality unless it is the principle of becoming and becoming is not acceptable if it cannot be traced back to being, but rather at first in the realm of a dialectical conception that relates being to becoming in the endeavor of a reciprocal justification and tries to bring the multiple back to the unitary, and later in the realm of being itself that, after denying the reality of all becoming, can only relate to itself. This evolution of philosophical thought can be easily followed, because it retraced the paths of the evolution of commercial capital.

## DECEPTION AND PERSUASION

The merchant exchanged goods in order to make money. In doing so, he gave up the violence of arms to make use of a more subtle and refined method, the violence of language. The merchant gave up the spoils of war, easy to acquire but short-lived, for a more lasting profit even though it was more difficult to conquer. He gave up the Dionysian activities of pillage and war for the Apollonian activity of commerce. While warrior people got the upper hand through the immediate violence of their strength, merchant people were too weak and cowardly and had to have recourse to cunning in order to survive. So they renounced the risk of adventure, put off their greed for a time, shunned open violence in order to take advantage of the hidden violence of cunning.

Cunning is the art of deceptive persuasion, and the art of deceptive persuasion is diplomacy. A superiority of language is needed; one has to be coherent in order to persuade with reasoning; one needs to *explain*, that is to say, to make it *plain*, through language, that things cannot possibly be different from what one wants them to be.



Explanation is the act of convincing violently with language; it is persuasion through which one can *convince oneself* of the truth of an argument; it is the facility for *convincing oneself*. To explain is thus to persuade the opposing party that the behavior one is trying to secure is advantageous to them. The merchant must persuade in order to sell his goods at a profit, and in order to accomplish this he must play on the desire of the eventual buyers. He must swindle through persuasion. The art of persuasive deception is typical of the merchant.

The powers of thought and language over reality are guaranteed only by the separation between language and reality; but power over reality can only mean taking possession of it. There is a paradox in the fact that this power, which is only guaranteed by separation, must at the same time be a possession. This leads to an endless process in which language and thought continually try to take possession of reality, while continually reestablishing their distance from it. This is appropriate for the activity of expressing themselves as the thought and language of alienated power. The absurdity is the will to take possession of reality in the moment and in the very act in which separation from it is established.

## “EARNING” REALITY

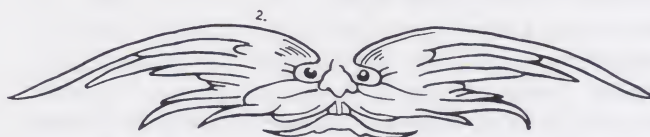
In order to better understand the relationship between the development of Greek philosophy and the parallel development of the commercial economy, it is useful to compare the conception of nature held by the earlier Ionian philosophers with the philosophical speculations of Parmenides in order to understand the substantial difference between them.

When the Ionian philosophers spoke of natural reality, they used the word *ta onta*, which means the things that exist, because they perceived reality in its concrete multiplicity. However it may have been interpreted, the essence of the world showed itself to them under the visible form of a plurality of things, rich in all their qualities. Being appeared as singular for the first time in Parmenides and was designated by the term *ta on* which meant that which is. The essence of the world was no longer a variegated plurality of qualities, but rather one single abstract and general quality. The change of language revealed the advent of a new conception of reality. It was no longer made up of the multiple things gathered from sensory experience or speculative reflection, but was the intelligible object of rational reflection (the *logos*) that was expressed through a language that, critically reflecting on itself, found its basic requirement in the principle of non-contradiction.

The Being of Parmenides is *One*, identical to itself; it cannot be other than itself, but can only grow into itself. The Being of Parmenides is intelligible, the object of *logos*, that is to say of reason. It is the object of rational language. Or rather, it is formed in the sphere of this rational language that is common to all human beings, the general abstract

element of their reciprocal relations of communication. However, the Being of Parmenides is not immediately visible in reality. It must be acquired through a difficult conquest: the investigation of the philosopher. The essence of reality must be “earned”.

The connection between the Being of Parmenides and exchange value in the form of money, a pure abstraction that is identical to itself, should be evident. Money is accumulated in order to buy goods in one place and resell them in another with the aim of getting money. But the exchange of money with money seems absurd, since exchanging things which are identical to each other makes no sense. The sense in this process actually comes from the fact that money is not exchanged for an equal amount of money, but for a greater amount, thus increasing its value. This happens because the goods are bought at a low price so that they can be sold at a higher price. Thus money can be exchanged with itself; it can represent the unchangeable being that has reason to exist only in itself. At this point, reality becomes *One* in the qualitative sense. Its only quality is “exchangeability”, exchange value.



“The doctrine of Parmenides marks the moment in which the contradiction between the becoming of the sensory world, this Ionian world of the *physis* and the *genesis*, and the logical requirements of thought are proclaimed,” Vernant states. In other words, it marks the moment in which the contradiction between the differing qualities of goods and the single quality of money is set forth. This single quality is known as exchange value, interchangeability, that which all things have in common, that which is the essence of all things, that which makes all things comparable, that which places them in relation, that which constitutes their *ratio*, their rational, intelligible, logical aspect. Vernant goes on: “After Parmenides the task of philosophy would be that of restoring the link between the rational universe of discourse and the sensory world of nature through more subtly shaded definitions of the principle of non-contradiction.” In Parmenides this link—that is to say, the link between the exchange value of things and the things themselves—is destroyed. The exchange value of things replaces them, representing them in the same way as the rational world of discourse represents the sensory world of nature.

Greek reason is commercial reason. Commerce can take place only in terms of linguistic fraud, and this language is built on deception. This language must persuade, must offer evidence for persuasion, must explain. This language, like the Being of Parmenides, must find its own verification in itself.



# China: Capitalist Discipline and Rising Protests

China has gone through enormous changes over the last twenty years. And while it is certainly part of a single, global regime of value--and, thus, subject to capitalism's disciplinary regimes--it is not on the path that leads to the U.S. model. All state-capital relations are hybrid systems; there is no set path or most advanced form towards which all others tend. Each existing form takes up a place within the global regime of value and competes within that regime. China, therefore, should not be viewed imply as further back on an imagined evolutionary; it has its own unique history and no form of state-capital relation is the best for all circumstances.

A simple evolutionary view of capitalism posits the U.S. as the most advanced capitalist country. By oversimplifying our present situation, such a view ignores important aspects of the development of capitalism and the state-capital relationship, and it closes us off from important spaces from which we could critique and attack capitalism. A simple evolutionary schema of social development has been with us for some time, from the early anthropologists, to social Darwinists and sociologists, to Marxism. Such a schema places all societies on a singular ladder of development from primitive to advanced capitalist, and all societies are assumed to follow the same path. Thus what separates us from another society is an amount of time, how much further back in history they are. It is also assumed, therefore, that we can look back at ourselves by looking at other societies. Instead we need to understand how we are spatially separated from other societies. Capitalism certainly has come to incorporate the entire globe; yet we shouldn't assume that capitalism is a process that solely homogenizes the world: all roads don't lead to the U.S. The Chinese reforms are producing a system very different from the U.S. (not that there aren't significant similarities).

The 1980s and 1990s mark a passage to a new form of the state-capital relation in China. The history of this change is a history of class struggle and global pressures. Within China in the late 1960s, a volatile critique of the bureaucratic institutions and internal political struggles to control alienated power brought about a transformation of the Chinese state-capital relation. The Cultural Revolution was not merely a cynical political movement, it was also an anti-political movement that attacked the institutions of alienated power. The authority of the Party was eroded and the bureaucracy lost its ability to control events; there was a massive refusal of work. At the same time there was a struggle by many different parties to regain control of alienated power, and to re-institutionalize it. After the sabotage of production reached an intolerable level, Mao and the military reasserted a degree of control.

But after Mao's death a new political space for the control of alienated power opened. Again this space was partially produced by the continuing critique of bureaucracy that, by the late 1970s, had grown into the Democracy Wall movement. Deng Xiaoping politically rode that critique to take power over the bureaucracy. Yet Deng could in no way rebuild the power that Mao and the earlier bureaucracy held over people; a new system had to be built, a new form of the state-capital relation. This new system had to rely more on social consensus, and could no

longer command the level of control over social organization that the old system did. This new system was based both materially and ideologically on the development of technology and the advancement of efficient production. It had to import both high technology and capital for investment.

This fit well with the needs of the global capital. Capital, in its need to ever expand, was looking for new areas in which to invest over accumulated capital and to sell the surplus of over-produced products: it needed both cheap labor and willing consumers. China had both. Yet when you hear all the talk of the "vast untapped market of China," know that the targeted market is the urban population of China, especially the coastal urban population. And the creation of this urban consumer society has brought about one of the defining features of the present Chinese society, the deepening urban/rural split. The big Chinese cities are now part of the first world: huge skyscrapers fill the skyline and are being built at a furious rate, there is a constant ringing from cell phones, gated communities spring up out of farm land on the outskirts of the cities, and the latest fashion is sold on every street. In the countryside, where 75% of the population lives, life is getting tougher and unemployment is growing.

In the late 1970's, the Chinese reforms under Deng Xiaoping began in the countryside by dismantling the collectives and allowing households to take responsibility for growing food on leased plots. Under such a system rural incomes grew rapidly, and, in the late 1980's and 1990's, reform moved on to the urban industries. It is only in the last few years that state industries have had to deal with the pressures of competition. Huge layoffs have been the primary way for these industries to become profitable; still, many have gone bankrupt and been sold off. It has only been by maintaining a national growth rate of around 8% that many of these urban industrial laborers have been given new jobs, although many remain unemployed. The nature of their jobs has also changed. The old state industries guaranteed one a job for life, health care, schooling for one's children, and housing. These sectors of society are increasingly being privatized and most jobs offer little assistance. Many of the urban unemployed have been given make-work jobs with low pay and no benefits. And most new urban jobs are being created by private and foreign investment.

At the same time the rural economy has stagnated. The growth of rural incomes was 1.8% in 2000, whereas urban incomes rose by 6%. But for both, the rate of growth is slowing, and it is estimated that soon rural incomes will not grow at all. Rural enterprises had grown in number in the 1980's, soaking up



much of the excess rural labor. But as capitalist valorization plays an increasingly important role in decision making, these state supported enterprises have been failing at a very high rate, and only about one quarter of surplus agricultural laborers are finding employment in rural enterprises at the moment. Some rural laborers have referred to rural enterprises as "new enclosures." At the beginning of the reform movement the enterprises came in and took over farmers land with the support of the local state, and many of the farmers were given jobs in such industries. Now that these industries are going bankrupt and being sold off, the rural laborers have no place to find work and no land to return to, so they have to head to the cities in order to survive. There is little private and almost no foreign investment in rural areas. In the 1990's, it is the rural unemployed who have grown the fastest (the rural unemployed is estimated at around 130 to 200 million).

Yet the state seems to fear urban unrest the most, and, in order to keep the cities stable, it restricts the movement of rural unemployed into the cities. The wages and consumption in the cities are higher than rural areas. Internal migration is for the most part illegal: one needs a residence permit to live in a city. The state also raised the price of train tickets significantly in order to stem the tide of the rural poor. The status of being illegal immigrants in one's own country has only increased the precariousness of the rural poor, and, at the same time, it has produced a huge reserve of cheap labor. Most of the sweatshops that produce goods for export are filled with such laborers, mostly rural women.

A second--and no less important--characteristic of the new social system in China is corruption. But corruption should not be understood as an irregularity; corruption is how capitalism operates in China, it is the normal economic system. Corruption is one of the most common ways of extracting surplus value from workers. When factories go "bankrupt" workers don't get paid and money disappears into the pockets of capitalists and state officials. To keep one's job and not be immediately laid-off, a worker has to give "gifts" to their manager, and the manager in turn passes gifts up to the bosses. The money ends up in the hands of individual or state capitalists. To collect health insurance, workers also need to pay off managers. New style contracts are called "life and death contracts," as the managers have the power of life and death over the workers; and, joining the market economy when one is laid off is called "jumping into the sea." Protests against corruption are protests against surplus extraction, capitalist exploitation.

Although little reported in the Western media, such protest go on every day in China. These protests usually begin when either a firm goes bankrupt, employees are laid off or wages aren't paid for several months (a very common occurrence in China). Factories often try to "buy off seniority," which means that people are paid a fee when laid off depending on how long they have worked. The organization of protests are quite spontaneous; workers will suddenly hold a sit-in at the factory or, more likely, take to the streets to demonstrate. And the outcome can be varied: either the workers will be paid a little to go home and be quiet or, if the protest is particularly disruptive or continues too long the armed police will put it down, sometimes killing

demonstrators. Common targets for sit-ins these days are railway lines or highways. On January 12, 2001 4000 workers from the Jilin Industrial Chemical Group blocked a public highway for three days in subzero temperatures. In January 1999, 100 retired workers from a Wuhan factory demonstrated because their company stopped paying their pensions. 200 police attacked them violently. In October 1998, 500 workers from an iron and steel factory in Sichuan held a sit down strike on a vital railway line and were attacked by armed police. There have been reports of workers handing out flyers, but of course, no publications can be produced and communication between struggles is rare and only via rumor and word of mouth. There have also been reports of workers assassinating bosses or managers who laid them off. While it is hard to get guns in China bomb making material is easy to come by; and, the number of bombings--many of them unsolved--is on the rise. A portion of these are done by disgruntled workers. Unfortunately the targets have been rather random. And these protests are likely to continue to increase in frequency as the Chinese economy comes to be more fully integrated into the global capitalist regime of value.

The changes driving these protests are due in a large part to the leadership's decision to bring the Chinese economy under the reign of the global capitalist regime of value. Since 1992, the Chinese government has moved to make Chinese industry competitive on the world market. One of the more significant moves to insert the economy into the global regime of value was the 1994 devaluation of the Chinese currency. This devaluation is one of the primary causes of the 1997 Asian economic crisis, as it made the labor costs of smaller Asian nations less competitive thus hurting their investment. The increase in foreign investment in China (almost all in the coastal cities) has been extremely important in soaking up unemployed labor, but it hasn't been enough. To deal with this problem the government has also rapidly increased its spending on infrastructure. Yet again, most of this investment has been on the coast in the big cities. The large State Owned Enterprises have had to become profitable, and many have gone bankrupt. The government has also tried to spur domestic (urban) consumer spending, giving urban workers two weeks of extra holidays to spend money and lowering the interest rate and raising the taxes on savings accounts. But the famous untapped consumer market of China isn't what it is purported to be. There is very little consumer spending in the countryside where the majority of Chinese live, and urban spending has been much less than hoped for.

Another milestone in China's move to become fully part of global capitalism will be its entry into the WTO (probably in the fall). Yet this will only compound the rural problems, as membership in the WTO will particularly hurt the rural population. China's agricultural goods aren't competitive on the world market. With WTO entry, cheaper agricultural goods will enter China's cities from abroad, and rural incomes, which are already stagnating, will probably drop significantly. The state is making a lot of noise about increasing rural investment, but such investment is much more difficult than urban investment due, in part, to the small scale of farming in China.



In order to maintain social stability with so many tensions coming to a fore, the Chinese state resorts to ideology as well as force. In a society that looks nothing at all like the one Mao envisioned, the Party has had to recreate its image and build a new ideological foundation. It can no longer claim to represent the interests of proletarian class struggle, and instead advocates class harmony. In addition, according to a new formulation by Party Chairman Jiang Zemin, the Party should first represent "the development needs of the most advanced forces of production." The state represents the interest of the builders of high tech industrial park and the commercial developers of nanotechnology, not the proletariat and the peasant. Thus the Party is now more open about the fact that it has more in common with the budding capitalist class in China than with the workers. Both the government and many of the new capitalists see democracy as a chaotic force in China. And both are intent on keeping the workers from organizing or acting in their own interests. Secondly, the Party has increasingly turned to fostering nationalism in order to seem to represent the body of the nation instead of a single class within it. It continues to claim to speak for general interests not class interests. This is the prime reason for China's spending so much to get picked as the site for the 2008 Olympic Games. Thirdly, since Deng Xiaoping came to power in the late 1970s, the Party has used technological development as one of its primary claims to power. It argues in part that it is a rule of technicians more than politicians, that science is in command, and that under its management technological development will free people from toil and poverty. One hears no end to the propaganda that science will solve and is solving the problems of the Chinese people.

But ideological claims on alienated power cannot work alone to smooth over the tensions and contradictions of society. The Chinese state also has turned to a more sophisticated management of opinion to control society. Opinion is a flattened idea that operates like a commodity. It is perfect for a consumer society in which everybody is supposed to find a market niche to fit within. In China today everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but the reproduction of opinion is controlled. Nobody cares what the average person says in their own home, but it is impossible to reproduce your opinions and spread them across society if that opinion is upsetting to the state-capital relation.

The state even allows call-in radio and television shows now: mostly they discuss tame subjects in which people discuss their personal tastes, style and products, but some cover more controversial topics, and they are more tightly controlled. Through its newspapers and media, the state circulates updates on public opinion: "all of the people of Beijing want the Olympic games here in 2008"; "the people of China understand that the Falungong is anti-science, anti-society, and anti-human." The state now even allows talk shows; but they are very controlled. Intellectuals usually play an important role in such shows, explaining how there are winners and losers in society, and the losers should accept their lot (a strange idea indeed, but one that is all too unquestioned here in the U.S. as well) so that society can develop. Chinese intellectuals aren't embarrassed to resort to social Darwinian arguments or to announce that the market

economy is the only one possible. A very few Chinese intellectuals have questioned the way society is developing, but their texts and books get banned. In general, intellectuals are becoming technicians for guiding the reform process in line with market economics.

As in the West, advertising plays no small role in producing 'public opinion' in China. It is not only products that are sold by advertising, but a whole type of society, consumer society. The idea of fashion is being sold as well as particular styles. To be modern is to have varied tastes. Matched up with this new society is a new architecture, a new physical shape to the city. And that architecture is a utopic image that points to the future. Billboards that stand over huge sprawling highway overpasses that reach to three levels are plastered with pictures of huge sprawling highway overpasses: we are modern, the very shape of our city proves it. Beijing is replete with shopping malls, all bright with jutting metal and glass, proclaiming post-modernity has arrived or at least it will be here soon with a little more work, where one can forget one is in the 3rd world, one is really in a 1st world enclave.

Yet, Chinese society is most definitely becoming much less stable. There are now thousands of protests a year in China; the spectacles of Beijing don't work their magic in the dying, inland industrial cities and rural areas. A year ago, the largest of these protests took place in a northeastern mining town. The mine was closed, putting the whole town out of work. This caused three days of riots, which included the burning of police cars and were only put down by the army. In a few protests, police have even been killed. Rural riots have also taken place, many over water rights in the increasingly drought prone north. Farmers have even attacked gated communities on the edge of Beijing that had taken their land. Yet these outbursts haven't been able to build into any sort of movement. The Chinese government doesn't allow any autonomous organization. Nor does it allow independent publications to exist. When China recently signed UN covenants on human and social rights, it specifically excluded the sections that allowed for autonomous unions and free association. Not that such rights would ever be observed if they had signed them anyhow. It is autonomous organization that the Chinese government is most afraid of, and that will surely be illegal indefinitely.

Many questions remain: Will the Chinese state be able to contain the discontent that is generated by the increasing insertion of Chinese society into the global capitalist regime of value? Will such discontent find effective means of organization and action? Will such struggles find ways to communicate with each other? And, how can we act in solidarity with such struggles?





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